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OF

SAINT ALPHONSUS DE LIGUORI,

DOCTOR OF THE CHURCH,

Bishop of Saint Agatha, and Founder of the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer.

TRANSLATED FROM THE ITALIAN.

EDITED BY

REV. EUGENE GRIMM,

Priest of the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer.

THE ASCETICAL WORKS.

Volume XX.

LETTERS.

Volume III.

PART I.

General Correspondence.

THE APOSTOLIC BENEDICTION.

RÑDE PATER:

Memoriam gloriosi Congregationis SS. Redemptoris Fundatoris, centesimo, ab ejus obitu, adventante anno, pio et admodum opportuno consilio recolere aggressus es, dum omnia ipsius opera anglice vertenda, et typis edenda curasti. Summus itaque Pontifex, cui tum S. Doctoris exaltatio, tum fidelium utilitas summopere cordi est libentissime excepit 9 volumina huc usque edita, quæ Ei offerre voluisti. Ac dum meritas Tibi laudes de hac perutili tua cura præbet, et gratias de filiali oblatione agit, Benedictionem, quam tuis obsequentissimis litteris petiisti, Emi quoque archiepiscopi Baltimorensis commendationi obsecundans, ex intimo corde impertiit.

Hæc ad Te deferens fausta cuncta ac felicia a Domino Tibi adprecor.

Paternitatis Tuæ,

Addictissimus,

M. CARD. RAMPOLLA.

ROMAE, die 4 Junii, 1888.

TRANSLATION.

REVEREND FATHER:

As the centenary of the death of the illustrious Founder of the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer drew near, you conceived the pious and appropriate plan of shedding a new lustre on his memory by translating all his works into English and publishing them. The Holy Father, therefore, who has at heart the spiritual advancement of the faithful, as well as the exaltation of the holy Doctor, has most graciously accepted the nine volumes thus far published, which you wished to present to him. While bestowing upon you well-deserved praise for your useful labor, and thanking you for the gift inspired by your filial love, he gives you from his heart the blessing which you humbly asked for in your letter, complying also with the request of the Most Rev. Archbishop of Baltimore.

As the bearer of this, I wish you all happiness in the Lord.

I am, Reverend Sir,

Your obedient servant,

M. CARD. RAMPOLLA.

ROME, June 4, 1888.

The Centenary Edition.

LETTERS OF ST. ALPHONSUS MARIA DE LIGUORI,

DOCTOR OF THE CHURCH,

Bishop of Saint Agatha, and Founder of the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer.

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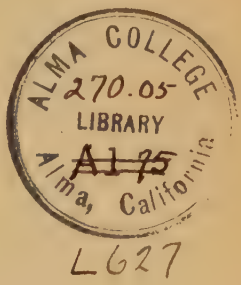

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APPROBATION.

By virtue of the authority granted me by the Most Rev. Nicholas Mauron, Superior-General of the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer, I hereby sanction the publication of the work entitled "Letters", which is Vol. XX. of the new and complete edition in English of the works of Saint Alphonsus de Liguori, called "The Centenary Edition".

FERDINAND A. LITZ, C. SS. R.,
Sup. Prov. Baltimorensis.

BALTIMORE, MD., *January* 22, 1894.

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LETTER OF MGR. MERMILLOD,

BISHOP OF LAUSANNE AND GENEVA.[1]

FRIBOURG, October 6, 1889.

Feast of Our Lady of the Holy Rosary.

Reverend and Dear Father,

YOU have undertaken and are bringing to a successful close the publication of the Correspondence of St. Alphonsus. Your labor of translation of the admirable Letters of the holy Doctor has been performed in a faithful and in an interesting manner.

This Correspondence should attract the attention of bishops, of priests, and of all apostolic men; but it also deserves to be known to the faithful. The soul of the great Bishop of St. Agatha of the Goths, his high intelligence, his incomparable activity, the fertility of his works, his spirit of faith, his supernatural courage, are therein fully revealed and offer lessons useful to those who love and serve the Church.

What especially strikes me in these Letters is their eminently practical character. They show us the saint in his struggles with innumerable difficulties, everywhere meeting with an opposition that would have been insurmountable for a soul less valiant and less holy than his. He struggles for the foundation of his Order and for his houses whose existence has been menaced; he struggles to reform his diocese in the midst of the most painful contra-

[1] This is a translation of a letter addressed by Bishop Mermillod to Father F. Dumortier, C. SS. R., the translator into French of the Letters of St. Alphonsus. On the 23d of June, 1890, Bishop Mermillod was created Cardinal by Pope Leo XIII.

dictions; he struggles to propagate and defend the true doctrine; and when one should think that the time had come for him to enjoy some repose after so many combats, the saddest trials come upon him to crown his old age. There was no longer a struggle, it was the most sublime resignation that characterized this invincible soul, whom neither age, nor illness, nor the most cruel misfortunes could discourage. What were the words that then escaped his lips! THAT THEY HAVE DEPRIVED ME OF MY DIGNITY OF RECTOR MAJOR, he said, I CARE LITTLE; IT SUFFICES THAT THEY HAVE NOT TAKEN FROM ME JESUS, MY SAVIOUR, AND MARY, MY MOTHER! I know nothing more beautiful than this answer of the holy Doctor; and no servant of the Church, whatever may be the crosses that overwhelm him, can read these touching pages without feeling himself impelled to enter with renewed ardor upon the performance of his duty, and to bow with perfect submission to the will of God.

The apostolic man, my dear Father, also appears most marvellously in the Correspondence of St. Alphonsus; and this publication, from this point of view, assumes an opportuneness that is truly providential. It is at a time when our magnanimous Pontiff, His Holiness Leo XIII., is preaching to the entire world the Crusade of prayer and of Christian associations, that you give us, in the Letters of the APOSTLE OF PRAYER, of the Apostle of Italy in the 18th century, very instructive details on these two important subjects. How great will be the joy of the laborers of the Gospel, of the pastors of souls, of the missionaries, of the souls consecrated to God, to find in this beautiful work teachings that are most appropriate to their state! Nothing appears to me to be more complete, more varied, more interesting for those who truly wish to love and serve God.

I venture to congratulate the Sons of St. Alphonsus on having added to the theological and ascetical works of the holy Doctor, a publication that will be a real treasure for the clergy and for the faithful. I congratulate you also on having chosen for the issuing of your work the excellent publishers who have already rendered so many services to

Christian letters; they could not employ their artistic skill in a better cause.

Continue, then, your beautiful labor, my dear Father; the sympathies of many sustain you, and I am supremely interested in the finishing of your work.

✠ GASPARD,
Bishop of Lausanne and of Geneva.

CONTENTS.

PAGE

APPROBATION, ... iv
LETTER OF MGR. MERMILLOD, ... v

LETTERS OF ST. ALPHONSUS DE LIGUORI.

PART I.

GENERAL CORRESPONDENCE.
(Conclusion.)

A. D. 1774.

LETTER

755. TO THE MUNICIPALITY OF AIROLA.—The saint insists on having a preacher for Lent. — Arienzo, January 13, 3
756. TO FATHER FRANCESCO A. DE PAOLA.—Foundation at Ceprano.—Gratitude to the Bishop of Veroli.—Arienzo, January 25, ... 4
757. TO FATHER A. VILLANI.—He invites him to an interview.—Arienzo, February 9, ... 5
758. TO THE SAME.—Foundation at Ceprano.—Details relative to two postulants.—Arienzo [end of February], . 7
759. TO FATHER FRANCESCO A. DE PAOLA. — Concerning the future of the Congregation.—Particular counsels.—[March], ... 9
760. TO FATHER LUIGI CAPUANO.—He quiets his scruples relative to the ministry of the confessional.—Arienzo, March 3, ... 11
761. TO THE ADMINISTRATORS OF S. NICOLA. — He asks them to grant a larger remuneration for services rendered.—Arienzo, March 8, ... 12
762. TO FATHER FRANCESCO A. PAOLA. — Concerning the foundation at Ceprano.—Arienzo, March 12, . . . 13

LETTER PAGE

763. To the Same.—Hopes in regard to the foundation at Arienzo, March 24, ... 14
764. To Father T. M. Caputo. — Expresses the desire to see him.—About ordinations.—Arienzo, March 30, . 15
765. To Father Fr. A. de Paola. — Desires him to take possession of the foundation at Ceprano.—Arienzo, April 2, ... 16
766. To Father A. Villani. — Proposes different subjects for certain employments.—Arienzo, April 8, . . 18
767. To Sister M. Rosa Graziano.—He exhorts her to be patient.—Arienzo, April 24, ... 19
768. To a Superior of Nuns.—He orders a separate building for the pupils.—Arienzo, May 23, ... 21
769. To Father A. Villani.—He makes efforts to save a vocation.—Arienzo, June 6, ... 22
770. To Father Fr. A. de Paola.—Foundation at Ceprano.—Concerning some smaller theological works. — Arienzo, June 12, ... 23
771. To the Same.—Concerning the foundation at Ceprano. —Arienzo, June 27, ... 25
772. To the Same.—The saint shares the affliction of Pope Clement XIV.—The foundation at Ceprano.—Arienzo, July 23, ... 27
773. To the Fathers and Brothers of the Congregation.—Recommendations relative to the love of Jesus Christ, to vocation, and to regular observance. — [Arienzo], July 29, ... 29
774. To Don Michele N.—Recommends conformity to the will of God.—Arienzo, August 6, ... 35
775. To Father Fr. A. de Paola. — Seeks information concerning the foundation at Ceprano.—Arienzo, August 12, ... 36
776. To the Same.—He rejoices at not being obliged to accept a foundation at Rome.—Arienzo, August 25, . 37
777. To Father A. Villani.—The same subject.—[Arienzo], August 25, ... 38
778. To Don Giacomo di Nuzzo.—He invites him to come to him.—Arienzo, August 30, ... 39
779. To Mother Maria Raffaella della Carità. — He forbids her to return to Scala. — Arienzo, September 3, ... 40

LETTER PAGE

780. To the Redemptoristine Nuns of S. Agata. — Quiets their fears.—Arienzo, September 3, . . . 42
781. To a Parish Priest of S. Agata. — Charity of the saint towards the poor.—Arienzo, September 3, . . 44
782. To Father Fr. A. de Paola.—He asks for information concerning the foundation at Ceprano.—Arienzo, September 5, ... 45
783. To Father B. Gessari, O. P. — Missions to be given in the diocese of S. Agata.—Arienzo, September 7, . 46
784. To Father Fr. A. de Paola.—Asks him to forward a letter.—[The year 1774?] 48
785. To the Same.—Death of Clement XIV.—The Ceprano affair.—Arienzo, October 3, ... 49
786. To Father A. Villani.—Efforts to save a vocation.—Arienzo, October 8, ... 51
787. To Father B. Corrado.—Answers in reference to the practice of poverty.—Arienzo, October 10, . . . 53
788. To Father A. Villani.—Answer given to Father Mazzini.—Mission at Foggia.—Arienzo, October 13, . 54
789. To Father Fr. A. de Paola.—He encourages him to discharge well the office of Superior.—Arienzo, October 13, ... 55
790. To Canon G. Simioli.—He furnishes information and expresses the hope of seeing him a Cardinal.—Arienzo, October 20, ... 56
791. To Don T. Trabisonda.—Abuses to be reformed in the Church; qualities of a good Pope. — Arienzo, October 24, ... 57
792. To Don Michele N.—Gives him salutary advice. — Arienzo, November 1, ... 61
793. To Father A. Villani. — Thinks of resigning his episcopate.—Arienzo, November 9, ... 62
794. To the Same.—Favorable news from Sicily.—Arienzo, November 9, ... 64
795. To Brother Michele Ilardo.—He gives him various commissions.—Arienzo, November 14, . . . 65
796. To Father A. Villani. — Concerning affairs of the Congregation, and the resignation of his episcopate.—[Arienzo, November], ... 66
797. To a Nun.—Gives her salutary advice. — Arienzo, December 1, ... 68

LETTER PAGE

798. To Prince della Riccia.—He invokes his protection. —Arienzo, December 7, ... 69
799. To Sister M. Serafina Ruggieri.—He consoles her in affliction.—Arienzo, December 13, ... 70
800. To Sister B. Carafa. — He exhorts her to practise obedience.—Arienzo, December 15, ... 71
801. To Father A. Villani.—He asks his counsel.—Arienzo, December 18, ... 73
802. To a Father Consultor. — He asks him to come to see him.—Arienzo, December 18, ... 74
803. To the Duke di Maddaloni.—He excuses himself for not being able to comply with his request.—Arienzo, December 20, ... 76

A. D. 1775.

804. To Father Fr. A. de Paola.—Firmness of the saint; necessity of observance.—Arienzo, February 4, . . 77
805. To a Priest.—He solicits help for a mission.—Arienzo, February 13, ... 79
806. To Father Fr. A. de Paola.—He asks him to suspend proceedings in regard to a foundation.—[Arienzo, February], ... 80
807. To Don L. Carfora. — Zeal of the saint to repress scandal.—Arienzo, February 23, ... 81
808. To Father A. Villani.—Concerning an appointment and the resignation of his episcopate. — Arienzo, March 1, ... 82
809. To the Same.—Fears on account of his resignation.—[Arienzo, March 9], ... 83
810. To the Sovereign Pontiff, Pius VI. — Request to have the recitation of the divine Office commuted to other prayers.—[Arienzo], March, ... 83
811. To Father A. Villani.—Lawsuit of Baron Sarnelli.—Arienzo, March 20, ... 85
812. To Prince della Riccia. — Seeks a favor. — Arienzo, March 25, ... 87
813. To Father A. Maione.—About the Sarnelli lawsuit,—Arienzo, March 29, ... 88
814. To the Same.—The same subject.—[About April 2], . 91
815. To Father A. Villani and other Fathers on a Mission.—Recommendations.—[Arienzo, April 26], . 93
816. To the Lawyer, Don M. Terragnoli. — Asks his

LETTER PAGE

services in the affair of his resignation of the episcopate.—[Arienzo, April], ... 98

817. To Cardinal G. M. Castelli. — Request to support his project of resignation.—[Arienzo, April], . . 100

818. To Mgr. G. Calcagnini.—The same subject.—[April], 101

819. To the Sovereign Pontiff, Pius VI.—Requests to be relieved of the episcopate.—[April], ... 102

820. To Father A. Maione.—Concerning a lawsuit.—Arienzo, May 8, ... 104

821. To Father A. Villani.—Fears in regard to the future of his diocese.—[Arienzo], May 13, ... 106

822. To the Same.—Reasons why he should no longer remain in his diocese.—Arienzo, May 14, . . . 106

823. To Father A. Maione.—Concerning the Sarnelli lawsuit.—[Arienzo, May 21], ... 108

824. To the Same.—The same subject.—Arienzo, June 4, . 110

825. To Mgr. N. Borgia. — Recommendation of a young man.—[Arienzo, June 10], ... 111

826. To Mgr. O. Rossi.—He invites him to an interview.—June 17, ... 112

827. To Mother M. Raffaella.—Salutary advice to her Community.—Arienzo, June 27, ... 113

828. To Don E. de Liguori.—Informs him of his resignation and requests a service.—Arienzo, June 29, . . 115

829. To the Canonesses Regular of St. Augustine. — He bids them farewell.—Arienzo, June 29, . . . 117

830. To the Nuns at Frasso. — He leaves them his last recommendations.—Arienzo, June 30, ... 118

831. To Mother I. M. Affaitati.—Excuse for not rendering a service.—Nocera, September 14, ... 121

832. To the Fathers and Brothers of his Congregation.—General admonitions.—Nocera, November 4, . 122

833. To Father A. Maione. — Difficulties relative to the saint's pension and other matters.—Nocera, November 20, ... 125

834. To Ferdinand IV., King of Naples. — Petition regarding the payment of his pension.—[Nocera, end of November], ... 127

835. To Don Michele N.—Letter of thanks.—Nocera, December 22, ... 129

LETTER PAGE

A. D. 1776.

836. To Father A. Maione. — He asks advice. — Nocera, January 20, ... 129
837. To the Same.—Concerning the Sarnelli lawsuit.—Nocera, January 23, ... 132
838. To the Same.—Reasons why Tanucci should be called upon.—Nocera, January 26, ... 135
839. To Canon G. Simioli.—About a plan of missions.—Nocera, February 22, ... 137
840. To a Nun.—Spiritual advice.—Nocera, May 7, . . 138
841. To Don V. di Maio. — Seeks his mediation. — Nocera, May 5, ... 139
842. To his Cousin, Sr. M. A. de Liguori.—He thanks her for a present.—Nocera, May 9, ... 142
843. To Father N. in the House at Scifelli.—Concerning the future of the Congregation. — Nocera, May 30, 143
844. To Father G. Caione. — Concerning the projected foundation at Torrice.—Nocera, June 5, . . . 144
845. To Don Michele N. — Promise of prayers. — Nocera, June 30, ... 145
846. To Don V. di Maio.—Concerning a Manual of Moral Theology.—Missions etc.—Nocera, July 4, . . . 146
847. To Sister M. A. R. Graziano. — About her spiritual affairs.—Nocera, July 14, ... 148
848. To Don V. di Maio.—Joy at the wise regulations of the Archbishop of Naples.—Nocera, August 19, . . 149
849. To Father Fr. A. de Paola.—Concerning letters of affiliation and the foundation of Frosinone. — Nocera, September 18, ... 150
850. To Father A. Maione.—Concerning the lawsuit.—Nocera, October 4, ... 152
851. To Father G. Caione.—He asks him to arrange a novena in honor of St. Michael.—His book of Sunday Sermons.—[About October 20], ... 153
852. To Father P. P. Blasucci. — Confides to him the two houses in the Pontifical States.—[Nocera, October 24], 155
853. To Don D. Ruggiero. — He requests him to apply to Father G. Caione for a mission.—Nocera, October 25, 159
854. To Father P. P. Blasucci.—About the house at Frosi-

LETTER PAGE

none.—Rejects the idea of establishing a house at Rome.—[Nocera, October 27], ... 159

855. To Father A. Maione.—Imparts some news.—[Nocera, October 28], ... 163

856. To the Fathers and Brothers of his Congregation.—Regulations regarding the conduct of the Fathers on the missions and at home.—[Nocera, November], ... 164

857. To Father P. P. Blasucci.—Fall of Tanucci.—Recommendations relative to the foundations in the Pontifical States.—Nocera, November 4, ... 171

858. To Father A. Maione.—Concerning the Sarnelli lawsuit.—Nocera, November 4, ... 174

859. To Father P. P. Blasucci.—Concerning the house at Frosinone.—Nocera, November 11, ... 176

860. To the Same.—Negotiations relative to the house at Frosinone.—Benevolence of Pope Pius VI. towards the saint etc.—Nocera, December 3, ... 180

861. To Mother M. Raffaella.—He exhorts a sick nun to be patient.—Pagani, December 12, ... 184

A. D. 1777.

862. To Father Fr. A. de Paola.—Kind disposition of the Cardinal Archbishop of Benevento towards the Institute.—Difficulties created by the government for religious bodies.—Nocera, January 2. 186

863. To Father D. Criscuoli. — Forbids him to preach Lenten sermons.—Nocera, January 14, . . . 189

864. To Father Fr. A. de Paola. — The same subject. — Nocera, January, ... 190

865. To Father G. Caione. — Concerning Benevento. — Apostolic labors asked for by Cardinal Banditi. — Nocera, January 23, ... 190

866. To Father Fr. A. de Paola.—Concerning the foundation at Frosinone.—[About January 24], . . 192

867. To the Same.—Happy news concerning the Congregation.—Nocera, January 28, ... 194

868. To the Same. — Concerning the affairs of Frosinone.—Nocera, February 3, ... 197

869. To the Same.—The same subject.—Nocera, February 15, 199

870. To Father P. P. Blasucci. — Tells him to go to

LETTER PAGE

Naples.—Critical state of affairs of the Congregation. Nocera, February 21, ... 202

871. To Father Fr. A. de Paola. — Concerning the contract relative to the house at Scifelli. — Nocera, February 21, ... 203

872. To Cardinal A. Branciforte.—Seeks his mediation. —Nocera, February 21, ... 204

873. To Father Fr. A. de Paola. — Complains of his silence.—Nocera, March 7, ... 205

874. To Father A. Maione. — Joy at the favorable turn of affairs.—[Nocera, about March 9], ... 206

875. To Father Fr. A. de Paola.—Directions concerning a contract.—The Pope's Bull.—Nocera, March 21, . 208

876. To the Same.—Various topics.—Nocera, March 27, . 209

877. To Father A. Maione.—Directions relative to a lawsuit.—Nocera, April 5, ... 211

878. To Don V. di Maio.—Thanks for a present.—Nocera, April 28, ... 212

879. To the Members of the "Chinese Congregation." Testimony to the holy life of Don Mattia Ripa.—[May 24], ... 213

880. To Signora A. Cassanova. — Thanks for services rendered to his Fathers.[Pagani, May 30], . . . 216

881. To Father A. Maione. — Concerning the house at Benevento.—Nocera, June 9, ... 217

882. To Father G. Caione.—Joy afforded him by the foundation of the house of Benevento.—Nocera, June 10, . 218

883. To the Same.—Instructions as to the examination of confessors and to the exercises at Benevento.—Nocera, June 29, ... 222

884. To Father G. B. di Costanzo.—Recommends fraternal charity.—Nocera, July 7, ... 226

885. To Father Fr. A. de Paola. — Solicitude for the houses in the Pontifical States. — Love of concord. — [Nocera, July 7], ... 228

886. To Father M. Corrado. — Subjects of the Institute must not sojourn with their families.—Nocera, July 15, 230

887. To a Nun.—Gives her news of his health and promises a book of devotion.—Nocera, July 15, ... 231

888 To Father G. Caione.—Recommendations relative to pious exercises.—Nocera, July 20, ... 232

LETTER PAGE

889. To a Nun.—He sends words of encouragement to a sick nun.—[Nocera], July 20, ... 233
890. To Father Fr. A. de Paola. — Reproof for having mistaken his sentiments; various other topics.—[Nocera, July], ... 234
891. To his Cousin, A. de Liguori. — Solicitude for the vocation of his niece.—[Nocera], July 28, . . . 236
892. To Father A. Maione.—Reasons why he cannot go to Naples.—[Nocera, September 2], ... 237
893. To the Sovereign Pontiff, Pius VI. — Concerning the state of his Congregation.—Solicits the privileges of the Passionist Fathers.—September 12, . . . 238
894. To Father Fr. A. de Paola. — Asks for information concerning the houses in the Pontifical States.—Nocera, September 19, ... 240
895. To the Same.—Prohibition to build.—The celebration of feasts.—Missions.—Nocera, October 5, . . . 242
896. To the Same.—Interest of the saint in the houses of Scifelli and Frosinone.—Nocera, October 9, . . 244
897. To the Chapter of S. Pietro, at Foggia — The saint attests the truth of a miraculous apparition.—[Nocera, October 10], ... 247
898. To Father Fr. A. de Paola.—Reasons why he removed several subjects. — Encouragement. — Nocera, October 12, ... 248
899. To Father G. Caione, — Announces the arrival of a lay-brother.—Nocera, November 6, ... 252
900. To the Same. — Arrangements made in regard to certain Brothers.—Nocera, November 10, . . . 252
901. To Father Fr. A. de Paola.—Promises to assist him. —Various recommendations.—Nocera [November], . 253
902. To Father G. Caione. — Joy at the success of the missions in Benevento.—Nocera, November 19, . 256
903. To Father Fr. A. de Paola. — Various topics.—Nocera, November 24, ... 257
904. To the Superior of the House of Iliceto. — He recommends a priest.—Nocera, November 28, . . 258
905. To Father Fr. A. de Paola. — Various recommendations.—Nocera, December 1, ... 259
906. To Sister B. Carafa.—Gives her some advice.—Nocera, December 25, ... 259

LETTER PAGE

A. D. 1778.

907. To Baron Castilleti.—Promises his prayers.—Pagani, January 21, ... 261
908. To the Superior of the Congregation of Missionary Priests. — Various counsels for missionaries. —Nocera, January 21, ... 262
909. To Father A. Tannoia. — On what condition he may receive a postulant.—Nocera, February 20, . . 264
910. To Father G. Caione.—About the disposition of a sum of money.—Nocera, March 1, ... 264
911. To Abbè C. F. Nonnotte. — Congratulates him for writing against Voltaire.—[Nocera, March], . . 268
912. To Sister B. Carafa.—Consoles and gives her advice. —Nocera, April 11, ... 271
913. To the Redemptoristine Nuns at S. Agata.—Exhorts them to resignation.—Pagani, April 21, . . 273
914. To Father Fr. A. de Paola.—Counsels in regard to a lawsuit.—[Nocera, April ?] 275
915. To the Same.—The sending of pecuniary aid.—Other topics.—[Nocera, end of April], ... 276
916. To F. M. A. de Voltaire.—Joy on hearing of his supposed conversion.—[Nocera, beginning of May], . 278
917. To the Redemptoristine Nuns at S. Agata.—Condolence.—Asks for information.—Nocera, May 12, . 279
918. To Mother M. Angelica. — He exhorts her to have confidence in God.—Pagani, May 24, ... 281
919. To Sister M. Celestina. — Utility of humiliations. — Pagani, May 24, ... 282
920. To Mother M. Angelica. — He does not think it expedient for a Sister to return to Scala. — Nocera, May 28, ... 283
921. To the Same.—Sends her a little work.—Pagani, June 5, 284
922. To the Same. — He reassures her as to the validity of her election.—Pagani, June 18, ... 286
923. To Don L. Carfora. — Joy at the opening of a new church.—Nocera, June 19, ... 287
924. To Mother M. Angelica.—He rejoices that peace has been restored.—Nocera, July 8, ... 288
925. To Sister M. G. della Croce. — Points out her conduct in spiritual trials. — Nocera, September 18, . 288

LETTER PAGE

926. To Mother M. Angelica.—Counsels regarding the observance of a particular rule.—Nocera, October 7, . 289
927. To Don M. Tezza. — Informs him of a restitution. — Nocera, October 20, ... 290
928. To the Municipal Counsellors of Corletto.—Refers them to the Superior of Caposele for missionaries. —Pagani, December 12, ... 291
929. To Mother M. Angelica. — Answer to her Christmas wishes.—Pagani, December 25, ... 292
930. To a Religious.—Conduct towards the confessor.—Pagani, December 26, ... 293

A. D. 1779.

931. To Father Fr. A. de Paola.—He complains that he is never consulted.—Nocera, February 19, . . . 294
932. To Sister M. A. R. Graziano. — He compassionates her in her affliction.—Nocera, April 9, . . . 296
933. To Father A. Maione.—Joy afforded him by the mediation of some influential persons.—Pagani, April 22, 296
934. To the Fathers and Brothers of his Congregation.—Recommendations relative to missions and regular observance.—Pagani, July 10, ... 298
935. To the Students of the Congregation. — He asks for volunteers for the Missions in Sicily. — Nocera, August 16, ... 301
936. To Father P. P. Blasucci. — Fears regarding the house of Girgenti.—Nocera, August 20, . . . 302
937. To Father A. Maione.—Joy at receiving a favorable decree from the king.—Nocera, August 23, . . . 303
938. To his Brother, Don E. de Liguori. — Disapproval of the proposed marriage of his nephew.—Nocera, September 1, ... 305
939. To Father M. B. Corrado.—Protests that he will not tolerate any change in the Rule.—Nocera, September 4, 306
940. To Marquis D. A. di Avena.—Acknowledges the receipt of a draft.—Nocera, September 20, . . . 308
941. To Don M. A. d'Ambrosio. — He recommends to him his servant, Alessio Pollio.—Nocera, September 20, . 309
942. To the Fathers of the House at Ciorani.—Orders the demolition of the cupola and exacts obedience.—[Nocera, October], ... 309

LETTER PAGE

943. To the Superior of the House at Ciorani.—Countermands the demolition of the cupola. — Nocera, November 4, ... 312
944. To Father S. Liguori.—Exhorts him to promote harmony.—Nocera, November 6, ... 314
945. To the Fathers of the Congregation in the Kingdom of Naples.—Recommends the work of the Crusade.—[Nocera, November 8], ... 315
946. To Father G. B. Ansalone. — Instruction concerning the Bulls of the Crusade.—Nocera, November 19, . 321
947. To Father D. Criscuoli.—Absolute necessity of obedience.—Nocera, December 8, ... 322
948. To Father B. Corrado. — He contradicts the rumors about changes introduced into the Rule.—Nocera, December 15, ... 323
949. To Father A. Tannoia.—The same subject.—Nocera, December 17, ... 324
950. To the Fathers of the House at Iliceto.—Necessity of obedience.—Nocera, December 26, . . 325

A. D. 1780.

951. To Marquis D. A. di Avena. — Reasons why he dismissed a subject.—Nocera, January 14, . . . 326
952. To Father G. Caione.—Various topics.—Nocera, January 25, ... 328
953. To Father B. Corrado. — Regarding the *Regolamento*. Nocera, March 3, ... 330
954. To the Same.—Grief of the saint at the sight of the changes introduced into the Rule.—Nocera, March 10, 331
955. To the Same. — Endeavors to repair the evil done by the *Regolamento*.—Nocera, March 13, ... 331
956. To the Same. — Revokes the powers of Father Maione and transmits them to Father Corrado. — [Nocera, March 13], ... 332
957. To the Same. — Notifies him of his appointment. — Nocera, March 13, ... 335
958. To Father D. Criscuoli.—Informs him of a measure he has taken and asks for prayers.—Nocera, March 16, 336
959 To Father A. Maione.—Kindness of the saint.—Entreats him to return to Ciorani. — [Nocera, March 20], 337

LETTER PAGE

960. To Father B. Corrado. — Reasons why he treated Father Maione with kindness. — [Nocera, March 20], 339

961. To Father D. Criscuoli.—Points out the means of removing the difficulties caused by the *Regolamento*. — Nocera, March 28, ... 339

962. To his Nephews. — Exhorts them to the practice of virtue and the love of study.—Nocera, April 4, . . 340

963. To Father G. Caione.—Condemns the *Regolamento*.— Nocera, April 7, ... 344

964. To Father I. Leggio. — Tries to calm the disquietude of the houses in the Pontifical States. — Rules for the Chapter. — Nocera, April 12, ... 345

965. To Father G. B. Ansalone.—Rules of election.—Nocera, April 12, ... 348

966. To a Father of the Congregation at Naples. — Measures taken to combat the fatal effects of the *Regolamento*.—Nocera, April 12, ... 350

967. To Father A. Ficocelli.—Principal points in which the *Regolamento* differs from the old Rule.–[Nocera, Apr. 16], 352

968. To Father C. Picone. — Appoints a day for the opening of the Chapter.—Nocera, April 23, . . . 355

969. To Father G. Caione.—Ample powers should be given his two deputies.—Nocera, April 25, ... 357

970. To Father A. Ficocelli.—Manifests his financial distress. — Advice relative to the approaching Assembly. Nocera, April 28, ... 358

971. To Father B. M. Corrado.—Regret at hearing of his illness.—Nocera, April 30, ... 359

972. To two Fathers, Elected to the Assembly.—Entreats them to give up certain projects.—[Nocera, end of April], ... 360

973. To Father G. Caione. — He formally orders him to send the two deputies.—Nocera, May 1, ... 361

974. To Marquis D. A. di Avena.—Recommends a Canon of Evoli for promotion.—Nocera, June 5, ... 362

975. To the Fathers and Brothers of the Kingdom.— Act notifying them of the decisions of the General Chapter.—Pagani, June 26, ... 363

976. To Cardinal F. Banditi. — He begs him to intervene with the Holy See in behalf of the Congregation.— [Nocera, July?] 367

LETTER PAGE

977. To Father P. P. Blasucci. — He begs him to go to Naples in the interest of the Congregation. — Nocera, August 19, ... 368
978. To Father D. Criscuoli.—He asks for a small sum of money.—Nocera, September 1, ... 369
979. To Sister M. S. Pescara. — He promises to comply with a request.—Nocera, September 25, ... 370
980. To Mother M. Angelica.—Recommends the daughter of his servant Alessio.—Nocera, October 4, . . . 371
981. To Father Fr. A. de Paola.—Requests to justify him with the Holy Father and to further the reunion.—Nocera, October 8, ... 372
982. To Mgr. C. Bergamo.—He invites him to an interview. —[Nocera, about October 12], ... 375
983. To Cardinal F. M. Banditi.—Gives him an explanation of the facts relative to the *Regolamento*.—[Nocera, October 18], ... 376
984. To Father Fr. A. de Paola.—Gives him the history of the *Regolamento* for the Sovereign Pontiff.—Nocera, October 18, ... 378
985. To the Same.—Sentiments of the government towards religious Orders.—Nocera, November 10, . . . 380
986. To Father G. Caione.—Request to solicit the signature of Cardinal Banditi to a letter addressed to the Pope.—Nocera, November 10, ... 382
987. To Father Fr. A. de Paola.—Invites him to a personal interview.—Nocera, November 13, . . . 383
988. To his Niece.—Exhorts her to leave the world.—[Nocera, November], ... 384
989. To Don P. Gavotti. — The same subject. — [Nocera, November 18], ... 385
990. To Father Fr. A. de Paola.—Proposal to solicit the Sovereign Pontiff to approve a reunion. — Nocera, November 25, ... 386
991. To Father G. Caione. — Requests him to go to Rome. [Nocera, November 25], ... 389
992. To the Sovereign Pontiff, Pius VI.—Gives him the history of the *Regolamento* and solicits a reunion. — [Nocera, December 15], ... 391
993. To the King of Naples. — He solicits various concessions.—[Nocera, December], ... 397

LETTER PAGE

994. To Marquis C. de Marco. — Requests him to present his petition to the king.—[Nocera, December], . . . 400
995. To his Nephew Giuseppe.—Christmas greeting.—Nocera, December 28, ... 400

A. D. 1781.

996. To Father G. Caione.—Request of prayers.—[Nocera, January 2], ... 401
997. To his Niece.—Exhorts her to study her vocation carefully.—Nocera, January 3, ... 402
998. To Father Fr. A. de Paola. — Reasons why he cannot reject the *Regolamento*.—Nocera, January 4, . . . 403
999. To Father B. M. Corrado. — Requests him to forbid any appeal to the king.—Nocera, January 5, ... 405
1000. To Father Fr. A. de Paola.—Sends him a letter addressed to an influential person.—Nocera, January 10, 406
1001. To Mgr. A. Puoti.—Answer to Christmas greetings.—Nocera, January 15, ... 408
1002. To Father B. M. Corrado.—He asks for news.—Nocera, January 18, ... 409
1003. To Father Fr. A. Paola.—The same subject.—[Nocera, about January 20], ... 410
1004. To the Same.—Advantages that would result from the reunion.—[Nocera, January 29], ... 411
1005. To the Same. — Promises not to interfere with his negotiations.—Nocera, February 8, ... 414
1006. To the Same. — Requests him to solicit a necessary delay.—Nocera, February 18, ... 415
1007. To his Niece.—Exhorts her not to return to the world.—[Nocera, the year 1781], ... 416
1008. To a Pious Maiden.—Counsels concerning the choice of a state:—[Nocera, 1781?] 417
1009. To Father B. M. Corrado.—Joy at the success of his petition to the king.—[Nocera, February 24], . . . 418
1010. To Father C. de Robertis.—Orders thanksgiving for the success of his petition.—Nocera, February 24], . 419
1011. To Cardinal F. S. de Zelada. — Solicits his mediation for the projected reunion. — Nocera, February 27, 420
1012. To Father G. Caione. — Complains of opposition on the part of the Fathers in the Pontifical States.—Nocera, March 12, ... 422

LETTER PAGE

1013. To a Nobleman.—He solicits his protection against the attacks of Sarnelli.—Nocera, March 12. . . . 423
1014. To Father I. Leggio.—He begs him not to hinder the reunion.—Nocera, March 24, ... 424
1015. To Fathe Fr. A. de Paola. — Requests him to recall Father Leggio from Rome.—Nocera, April 4, . . . 425
1016. To Cardinal T. M. Ghilini. — Begs him to have the Pontifical decree of 1780 revoked. — Nocera, April 14, 427
1017. To his Niece.—Counsels her to enter the religious life. —Nocera, April 23, ... 430
1018. To his Nephew Giuseppe.—Gives him good advice.—Nocera, June 3, ... 431
1019. To the Sovereign Pontiff, Pius VI. — Begs him to restore the favors of the Holy See to the houses in the kingdom.—[Month of June], ... 432
1020. To Father B. M. Corrado.—Request to ask the Pope for a favor.—Nocera, June 28, ... 438
1021. To the Rector of the House at Iliceto. — Sends him a subject for the novitiate.—Nocera, July 13, . 439
1022. To his Niece. — Rejoices to hear that she has decided to embrace the religious life.—Nocera, July 30, . . 440
1023. To Father D. Criscuoli.—He wishes the students to observe the old Constitution.—Pagani, August 9, . 441
1024. To his Niece.—Rules of conduct.—Nocera, August 19, 441
1025. To Sister B. Carafa.—Thanks for an act of kindness and compassionates her on her brother's death.—Nocera, September 20, ... 443
1026. To Father Fr. A. de Paola. — Joy at the success of the Fathers in the Pontifical States.—Nocera, Oct. 25, 444
1027. To Don G. di Geronimo.—He disapproves a nun's design of entering another Order.—Nocera, November 12, 445
1028. To Father Fr. A. de Paola. — He is pleased to hear of new foundations.—Nocera, November 23, . . 446
1029. To Father G. B. di Costanzo. — Thanks for having accepted an office. — Nocera, November 26, . . 448
1030. To Sister M. A. R. Graziano. — Censures the use of figured music.—Nocera, November 29, . . . 449

A. D. 1782.

1031. To his Niece.—Encouragement to consecrate herself to God.—Nocera, January 3, ... 450

LETTER PAGE

1032. To Father G. B. di Costanzo.—Concerning studies: Abelly's Theology.—Nocera, January 17, . . . 451
1033. To his Niece. — Advice in regard to her stay in the world.—Nocera, February 18, ... 451
1034. To Sister B. Carafa. — The way of the cross is the surest to attain salvation.—[Nocera], March 9, . . 453
1035. To the Same.—Recommends Christian indifference.—Nocera, May 15, ... 454
1036. To his Niece.—Encourages her in her pious designs.—Nocera, May 25, ... 455
1037. To Father Fr. A. de Paola. — Love of the saint for his brethren in the States.—Nocera, June 21, . . 455
1038. To his Niece. — Rejoices that she will soon take the habit.—Nocera, September 16, ... 457
1039. To Father A. de Meo. — Appoints him Superior of a mission.—Nocera, October 29, ... 458
1040. To his Niece.—Concerning the choice of a confessor.—Nocera, November 8, ... 460
1041. To Cardinal N. — Requests to intercede for him with the Pope.—Nocera, November 15, ... 461
1042. To his Niece.—Answer to Christmas greetings.—Nocera, December 22, ... 462
1043. To one of his Cousins.—Words of encouragement.—[Nocera, 1782?] 464

A. D. 1783.

1044. To Father B. M. Corrado.—Concerning the Sarnelli lawsuit.—Nocera, January 1, ... 465
1045. To Sister B. Carafa. — Counsels her to practise holy indifference.—Nocera, January 6, ... 466
1046. To the Representatifes of the Parish of Perdifumo.—He refuses to dismiss a subject.—Pagani, January 18, ... 466
1047. To Sister B. Carafa. — Exhorts her to perform her duties courageously.—Nocera, January 30, . . . 468
1048. To Don L. Carfora. — The care of souls is not to be sought of our own accord.—Pagani, February 19, . 469
1049. To his Niece. — About the choice of a confessor.—Nocera, March 3, ... 470
1050. To the Secretary of the Society "dei Bianchi". Notifies him that he has fulfilled an obligation. — Nocera, May 8, ... 470

LETTER PAGE

1051. To his Niece.—Exhorts her to make an entire sacrifice of herself.—Nocera, June 23, ... 471

1052. To Father D. Criscuoli. — Important elections to be held in the Institute.—Nocera, June 28, . . . 472

1053. To his Niece.—He congratulates her on her profession. —Nocera, July 11, ... 473

1054. To Father D. Criscuoli.—He announces that the elections have been postponed.—[Nocera, July], . . 474

1055. To the Same.—Date fixed for the opening of the Chapter.—Pagani, July 26, ... 475

1056. To the Fathers and Brothers in the Kingdom.— Decisions of the Chapter.—Pagani, August 30, . . 476

1057. To his Niece.—Counsels regarding a change of confessors.—Nocera, November 20, ... 485

1058. To Sister B. Carafa.—He consoles her in her trials.— Nocera, December 5, ... 486

1059. To his Niece.—Christmas wishes.—Nocera, December 25, ... 487

A. D. 1784.

1060. To the Same.—He recommends himself to her prayers. —[Nocera, 1784?] 488

1061. To the Same. — He recommends to her holy abandonment.—Nocera, August 17, ... 489

1062. To the Same.—He exhorts her to practise patience. — Pagani, August 30, ... 490

1063. To the new Superior of the Redemptoristines at S. Agata.—Advantages of peace in the Community.— Pagani, September 20, ... 490

1064. To his Niece. — Answer to Chrismas letter. — Nocera, December 17, ... 492

A. D. 1785.

1065. To the King of Naples. — Information concerning four young men.—[Nocera, October 19], . . . 492

SUPPLEMENTARY LETTERS.

1. To Mgr. T. Basta. — Concerning the ordination of a deacon.—Nocera, March 13, 1753, ... 495

LETTER PAGE

2. To Father G. Caione.—Removal of a Brother.—The Theology of Berti.—Nocera, January 5, 1757, . . 497
3. To Don Francesco N. — Arrangements relative to a mission.—Nocera, January 21, 1758, ... 499
4. To Father G. Caione. — Several recommendations.—Nocera, August 17, 1758, ... 500
5. To Father A. Tannoia. — Solicitude of the saint to save a vocation.—Nocera, July 17, 1760, . . . 501
6. To a Prioress. — Points out the date of his arrival at Arienzo.—S. Agata, July 17, 1762, ... 503
7. To Father A. Villani.—There are cases in which one must grant dispensations. ——— 503

General Correspondence.

III.

LAST YEARS OF HIS EPISCOPATE.

(1774 — 1775.)

LETTERS OF
ST. ALPHONSUS MARIA DE LIGUORI.

PART I.

General Correspondence.

(Conclusion.)

LETTER 755.

To the Gentlemen Composing the Municipality of Airola.

The saint insists on having a preacher for Lent.

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

ARIENZO, January 13, 1774.

Gentlemen: I have just received your letter, and I regret to hear of the distress in which the people of Airola are. But you must know that my conscience troubles me; for I would have great scruples, if I neglected to appoint a Father to preach in your place during the coming Lent.

Hence, there is no other way left than that you inform me at once, whether you wish me to select a preacher, so that the time may not pass by, and I may be able to select some one to labor for the benefit of those souls.

I bless you, and with renewed assurance I remain,

Your very devoted servant,

ALFONSO MARIA,
Bishop of Sant' Agata.

After a copy.

LETTER 756.

To Father Francesco Antonio de Paola, Superior of the House at Scifelli.

Foundation at Ceprano.—Gratitude shown by the saint to the Bishop of Veroli.

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

ARIENZO, January 25, 1774.

For a long time I had been expecting a letter from you and from Father Cimino; I have just received both letters, and am now fully informed of everything.

I admire the goodness which your bishop has shown to us. Tell him from me, that I know not how to thank him for it. I do not write to him, as I do not wish to weary him; but I should like to kiss his feet personally, and to thank him for his great charity.

I hope that the Pope will grant the favor; I have prayed for this intention. However, *Fiat voluntas tua!* [May Thy will be done!] I hope that God will console the good bishop.

I have written to Father Cimino at Rome, and have charged him with looking after the affair in regard to Ceprano; in regard to the other matters, there is but little hope. Let us always be united with the will of Jesus Christ, and he will take care of everything.

I beg your Reverence not to omit to write to me from time to time, especially when there is any particular news concerning our affairs, or concerning the dispute at Rome with the court of Naples.

I bless your Reverence and every one of my brethren; let them recommend me at Mass every day, because I am

troubled with palpitation of the heart, which exposes me every night to the danger of death.

BROTHER ALFONSO MARIA.

After the original preserved in the archives of Father General at Rome.

LETTER 757.

To Father Andrea Villani.

He invites him to an interview, in order to arrange some apostolic labors.

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

ARIENZO, February 9, 1774.

I have just received your two letters, in which you bid me send Father Mancusi at once to Nocera, in order to give the exercises at the convent of the *Purità*.

But I have at this moment two grave matters on my hands. The one is the monastery at Frasso where there are two factions, one siding with the Prioress, the other with the Assistant, and this monastery has become a real hell of dissensions.

I wished to send thither Father Lauria to give the exercises, but, it appears, this Father has been engaged elsewhere. It was then arranged that I was to send him on the first Monday of Lent.

The second affair, and for me the more important, regards the monastery at Airola, which is also embroiled in quarrels and factions. Now I have no one to send thither, because I do not know whether Father Lauria will be able to give the exercises after he has given them at Frasso; for I am told by Father Mancusi that Lauria's health is delicate. I, therefore, thought of sending Father Mancusi himself. However, if your Reverence can come here, we may settle

this and the other things, about which we shall have to speak.

You tell me that I should appoint Father Caione for Ceprano; but Fathers Cimino and Caione write to me from Rome, that I should appoint Father [Nicola] Grossi as Superior at Ceprano, and as his assistant [Father Giuseppe Maria] de Cunctis who is very popular with the inhabitants of Ceprano. This appointment I have already made, but it may be changed, and the circumstances, it seems to me, are favorable, since some malcontents have created trouble there. Father Cimino writes to me, that the Bishop of Veroli is working for us, and is trying, I believe, to break down the opposition.

If you come here, we shall regulate all these points.

Remind the Father, who has charge of the library at Nocera, to send me the volume in *duodecimo* for which I have asked him, namely: "Bossuet, Discorso sopra la Storia Universale."[1]

I bless you, dear Reverend Father, and all your subjects.

BROTHER ALFONSO MARIA.

[*P. S.*] The monastery at Sant' Agata has asked me for Father Mancusi, at least for three days. I must then send him there, before he departs from here. But, if Father Lauria cannot go to Airola, I must necessarily send Father Mancusi; for, as I have said, the wants of the monastery at Airola are more pressing than those of the *Purità* at Nocera.

After an old copy.

[1] "Discourses on Universal History."

LETTER 758.

To the Same.

Foundation at Ceprano.—Details relative to two postulants.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

ARIENZO, [towards the end of February, 1774.]

Reverend Father: I send you a letter which has been brought to me from Veroli by a young man of Turin, of whom I will speak further on.

As I stated in my last letter to you, I had, by the advice of Father Cimino, appointed Father Grossi to be Rector of the house at Ceprano. In fact, I believed that this Father had been assisting at the mission given at that place, and that the people wished to have him. But Father Grossi, as I have since learned, was not at Ceprano. I have, therefore, written to Father Caione, as you counselled me to do, and have confided to him the government of that house, and have told him to take as his companion, after having consulted with Father de Paola, the Father of that place who may appear to him to be best suited for this purpose.

The foundation at Ceprano was not yet definitively settled, when I last wrote; by this time this has, most probably, been settled, for the bishop has gone expressly to Ceprano to arrange matters.

The chanter of Montecorvino came to see me. He is thirty-six years old and is without education; for I am told that, if in his youth he has made studies at Naples, he afterwards abandoned them. I did not, therefore, believe that I could admit him. Nevertheless, Father Blasucci, after having had an interview with him, told me that he appeared to him to be a man of talent. I will, then, make no difficulty in keeping him as a boarder for a year or two,

the more so, as he assures me, that he will not in any way increase the expenses of the house. Let him begin his studies, so that we may see how he will succeed; have him observe all our Rules; then we may decide whether we can receive him. Reflect on this plan, and tell me what you think of it.[1]

As for the young man of Turin,[2] he is twenty-seven years old and is deficient. He has, however, lived more than three years in a seminary; but ill health has prevented him from studying much.

I told him that, in order to be admitted, he must necessarily obtain the consent of the Consultors; but it seems to me that he cannot be dismissed without a trial, since the steward of Casamari sent him by your advice.

Be that as it may, the poor young man has responded to the call, and with many dangers and at great expense made a journey of six hundred miles. He says that he has studied philosophy and Moral Theology, but I do not believe him to be very strong in these matters. However, he appears to me to have a very good intention, and is a gentleman; his family is the first in the place, his brother had for his portion ten thousand ducats; he has no other brother or sisters; finally, and this is the chief consideration, he has been told to come, and, therefore, he cannot be sent away. If God has not called him, he will leave of his own accord. Consult your Fathers, and let me know what they think.

In the meantime, I have sent the young man to S. Angelo [a Cupolo]. This, as I have told you, was done on the advice of Father Blasucci. The latter will set out to-

1 This chanter, a native of Montecorvino, was Gabriele Maiorino. He was admitted to the Congregation, made his vows in 1775, and died at Pagani, October 21, 1800.

2 This was the cleric Don Giuseppe Rustichelli, from the town of Coazzolo, in the Province of Asti. He began his novitiate, April 2, 1774, but was not admitted to profession.

morrow for S. Angelo, without knowing whether he is to give a retreat to the clergy or at the Nunziata. At Benevento he will learn what he has to do.

I send you the letter which was written to me from Veroli.

BROTHER ALFONSO MARIA.

[*P. S.*] Father Blasucci will go to-morrow, Friday, to Benevento. Father Mancusi will start for Airola where, together with Father Lauria, he will give a retreat to the nuns.

After the original in possession of Cavaliere Giancarlo Rossi at Rome.

LETTER 759.

To Father Francesco Antonio de Paola, Superior of the House at Scifelli.

Thoughts of the saint concerning the future of the Congregation.—Particular counsels.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

[March, 1774?]

I have read your long letter, and I, by no means, approve the reasons that you allege in favor of a foundation at Rome; my answer is ready in regard to every point. But why should we lose time, when we clearly see that God does not wish this foundation?

According to what certain people say, when I shall have gone, everything will go. I answer that the Congregation is not my work, but is the work of God; it is he that has maintained it during forty-two years; it is he that will continue to maintain it.

Why, then, should the King of Naples dissolve it? It does not injure any one; all the bishops approve it; it does not possess in its own right any revenues and, what is of more importance, the king desires (these are the very

words of the decree of his Catholic Majesty) *that this Association maintain itself not only during the life-time of Alfonso de Liguori, but indefinitely, provided that the work of the missions does not degenerate from its primitive fervor.*

The question of duration, as far as we are concerned, therefore, depends, in the first place, entirely on God; then, on the manner in which we conduct ourselves. Hence, we have but one thing to do: to live united with God, to observe our Rules, to be charitable to every one, to be satisfied in our miseries, and, above all, to be humble, for a little pride can ruin us, as it has ruined others.

On this occasion, dear Father, I would beg you that, during the time you discharge the duties of the office of Superior, you show yourself humble and affable to every one, above all on the missions, and show to the brethren the greatest charity. They are, indeed, subjected to great trials, are far from Naples, far from their relatives; you must, therefore, be very charitable towards them. I repeat the last injunction designedly, for your intentions are good and your conduct is irreproachable; but, on the other hand, your health is poor, you suffer from hypochondria, and this malady renders one disagreeable to the brethren. This was the only defect that was noticed in you, when you were Rector at Sant' Angelo.

I compassionate you on account of your delicate state of health; but I beg you to endeavor to treat every one with meekness. Your house is, besides, a Community that is now regularly established; and for this reason, I appointed Father de Cunctis to be Admonitor and Fathers Costanzo and Rastelli to be Consultors.

I will send you Father Capuano as you have desired me to do.

I have been expecting Father Grossi to have an interview

with him about the affairs of S. Cecilia [Scifelli] and of Ceprano, but he has not yet come.

On his arrival I will tell him all that you have written to me.

I have nothing else to write. I, therefore, bless you, my dear Father, and I bless all your subjects, one after the other.

BROTHER ALFONSO MARIA.

After the original preserved in the archives of Father General at Rome.

LETTER 760.

To Father Luigi Capuano.

He combats his scruples relative to the ministry of the confessional.

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

ARIENZO, March 3. [1774?]

I have read your letter attentively.

Here is my answer: place yourself at the feet of Jesus Christ and say to him: O Lord! I wish to do what is pleasing to Thee, and not what is pleasing to me.

Jesus Christ will answer you: What pleases me, is, that you do what the Superiors command you; *Qui vos audit, me audit* [He that heareth you, heareth me.—*Luke*, x. 16.]

This ministry, you say, *is for me a source of scruples.* But, my dear Luigi, find me a confessor with a timorous conscience, who exercises his ministry without having scruples. If your mode of reasoning were correct, no one would hear any more confessions.

It is a rule that, after having heard confessions, the confessor should not think of what he has done. It is sufficient that he has not deliberately wished to commit an error, I say *deliberately*.

You were at death's door, and God, as if by a miracle, has restored you to health, so that you may use it in doing his will, and do you now wish to withdraw from this duty?

When you feel some corporal indisposition, speak about it to the Superior, then do what he tells you. As for the scruples, be without disquietude: *Bonum Dominum habemus.* [The Master whom we serve, is a good master.] How can you imagine that God will send to hell a man that strives to please him?

Come, now, take courage! Do what obedience tells you, be without disquietude, and pray to God for me.

I bless you. Please recommend me to our Lord.

BROTHER ALFONSO MARIA.

After an old copy.

LETTER 761.

To the Administrators of the Church of S. Nicola.

He asks them to grant a large remuneration for services rendered.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

ARIENZO, from our episcopal palace, March 8, 1774.

Gentlemen: Signor Alessandro Manto has complained to me of not having received sufficient fees for services rendered by him to the church of S. Nicola, in his quality of advocate. You can, without difficulty, grant him an additional ten ducats; require of him the usual receipt.

I give you my blessing, and beg you to believe me,

Your very devoted servant,

ALFONSO MARIA,
Bishop of Sant' Agata.

After an old copy.

LETTER 762.

To Father Francesco Antonio de Paola, Superior of the House at Scifelli.

Communication relative to the foundation at Ceprano.—Forwarding of books.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

ARIENZO, March 12, 1774.

I learn through your letter that the bishop has gone to Ceprano, whither he has called Fathers Caione and Cimino. Let us, therefore, hope for good results. However, notwithstanding the favorable signs, the foundation, it seems to me, does not appear to have been made.

I, at once, ordered the Brother to prepare to buy, if necessary, the four following works: *The Truth of Faith*, a *Dogmatic Theology*, the *Nun Sanctified*, and the *Retreat to Priests* [*Selva*]; we shall afterwards see when and how we must send them.

If Father Cimino comes here, he will know how these books may be sent to Monsignor. In the meantime, he may tell his Lordship that the four works are ready. Send me immediately any good news that you may hear.

I bless you, dear Father, and all your companions.

BROTHER ALFONSO MARIA.

After the original preserved in the archives of Father General at Rome.

LETTER 763.

To the Same.

Hopes of the saint in regard to the foundation at Ceprano.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

ARIENZO, March 24, 1774.

I have carefully read Father Cimino's letter. He writes to me that he is about to return to Naples.

There is no need of being disquieted at the opposition that certain priests of Veroli make to the new foundation; for the Pope has given to the bishop the needed powers, and the bishop, who takes great interest in the affair, will know how to remove all difficulties.

If the things take a better turn, I am of opinion that you should at once accept the foundation by a formal act; for, after the house is once definitely established, opposition will cease.

On the other hand, I regard a foundation in the Pontifical States as necessary, but I know not whether that of S. Cecilia [Scifelli] can subsist in view of the few resources that are at its disposal.

Have the enclosed letter of thanks forwarded to Mgr. di Veroli. Read it; then send it at once to his Lordship.

After having written my letter, Father Cimino arrived with Father Caione.

I conclude by blessing you and all your companions.

BROTHER ALFONSO MARIA.

[*P. S.*] I send you by the courier the works destined for Mgr. di Veroli; namely: the *Nun Sanctified*, the *Truth of Faith*, *Selva*, and the Dogmatic Theology.

After an old copy.

LETTER 764.

To Father Master Tommaso Maria Caputo, of the Friars Preachers, Superior of the Seminary of Sant' Agata.

He expresses the desire to see him.—News in regard to the ordination at Pentecost.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

ARIENZO, March 30, 1774.

Reverend and Dear Father: My catarrh is diminishing and the fever has left me. Nevertheless, I am still in bed, and do not say Mass or the Office; for I wish to avoid a relapse and to get rid of my catarrh. Be so kind as to come to see me as soon as possible after Easter; I must confer with you on many points.

You may announce to your seminarians a piece of good news. At the time of the next ordination, that of Pentecost, I will confer the tonsure and the minor Orders upon all whom your Reverence will designate, and who have been found capable. From this last condition, those even who have priests in their families, whether the latter be brothers, uncles or others, will not be exempted. Let them know that those who have not yet made their retreat, should make it at S. Angelo a Cupolo.

I repeat, I am expecting you with impatience.

I give you my blessing, and beg you to believe me,

Your very devoted servant,

ALFONSO MARIA,
Bishop of Sant' Agata.

After the original preserved in the archives of the patriarchate of Jerusalem.

LETTER 765.

To Father Francesco Antonio de Paola, Superior at Scifelli.

He expresses the desire that possession should be taken as soon as possible of the foundation at Ceprano.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

ARIENZO, April 2, 1774.

My dear Father Francesco: I have just received your last letter, dated March 28. It is a long time since I sent to Father Cimino at Rome the necessary power of attorney, to accept the foundation at Ceprano. You now expect, you tell me, my last instructions for putting the project in execution. I, therefore, think I had better send you a new power of attorney left blank; it is destined for the person or the Father, whom you will judge to be best to accept this foundation in my name.

I have already told you in my last letter, I desire that the Fathers should take possession as soon as possible; thus they will, I hope, put an end to the numerous contests that have arisen at Ceprano. The Canons of Veroli, Father Cimino tells me, have represented to the Pope the injury that the seminary would suffer, if the revenues of the suppressed monastery were given to us; but the bishop has presented to the Pope another petition, and this petition is in our favor.

I hold for certain, that the Sovereign Pontiff will listen to the bishop rather than to the Canons; but what is to be done in regard to the opposition of these gentlemen, before having obtained a decision from His Holiness? It does not appear to me to be possible to go to Ceprano under these circumstances; the bishop himself would not permit such a thing. But enough on this point. I send you enclosed the power of attorney. Take counsel of Monsignor, and afterwards do what you think best.

I have finally sent you, by the same post which brought Father Cimino, those of my books, which the bishop desired to have. You have received them, I hope. Answer me without delay, and tell me all that is going on.

Ask for me the Fathers, who are to go to Ceprano, to show themselves affable towards every one, above all, towards those who are opposed to us; let them not display any resentment.

In these beginnings we must be satisfied with everything; *it is while we walk that the burden adjusts itself to our shoulders.*

Father Caione has made me have a doubt about the salubrity of the climate of Ceprano; but Father Cimino tells me that there is nothing to fear, and I hope that this is true.

From what Father Cimino says, Signor Ferrari, who has charge of the vessel, was to have written to me immediately; but up to the present time nothing has come. But enough; let me know how affairs stand.

I bless you, my Reverend Father, and all your subjects.

BROTHER ALFONSO MARIA.

[*P. S.*] I have been keeping my bed for the past two weeks, having an attack of catarrh of the chest which continues to torture me. May God have me in his holy keeping!

If God wishes to grant me yet a few days here below for the good of the Congregation, may he be blessed! If he does not wish this, may his holy name still be blessed!

After an old copy.

LETTER 766.

To Father Andrea Villani.

He proposes different subjects of the Institute for certain employments.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

ARIENZO, April 8, 1774.

Yesterday, Thursday, the five Fathers and the Brother took the Maddaloni road; they have, I hope, started this morning for the mission that is to be given at Gaeta.

As for Brother Michele della Torre,[1] I have written to you, on the word of several of our Fathers, that he did not appear to me the man who was suitable to transact our affairs at Naples; but yesterday I saw some of his writing in a note addressed to Brother Francesco Antonio,[2] and it is better than that of Brother Francesco, *that blessed soul of Paradise*.[3] Father Corrado writes to me that he also knows how to keep accounts. If things are so, no change need be made, and the Brother may remain.[4]

1 La Torre della Nunziata, a village situated near Naples.

2 Francesco Antonio Romito.

3 Brother Francesco Tartaglione, who for twenty-five years transacted at Naples the business of the Congregation, had died March 21, of this year, 1774. St. Alphonsus knew of his death in a supernatural manner. "I cannot doubt," says Aniello Vertucci in his deposition in the process of beatification (*Summar.* n. 31, § 103), "that the servant of God knew in a supernatural way the death of a Brother of his Congregation, named Francesco Tartaglione; for he one day said to Brother Francesco Antonio Romito: 'Do you know that Brother Francesco Tartaglione has passed to another life?' Brother Francesco Antonio was extremely surprised on hearing these words, for knowing the affection that the servant of God bore toward Brother Tartaglione, he had purposely hidden the news of his death."

4 Brother Michele Ilardo, in fact, succeeded the deceased Brother Francesco in his laborious duties, and he continued in them during

For the process, a Father should be appointed who understands such a thing. The best one, perhaps, would be Father Maione; for Father Corrado is Rector,[1] and he could hardly attend to affairs in the morning.

I was thinking of taking Don Paolo Sarnelli for our lawyer against Ciaramella;[2] but Father Corrado tells me that Celano has begun to set our affair going, and that he is a friend of the Commissary Carusi; we must, therefore, avoid giving him offence. Besides, it is Celano who is to defend us against the baron.[3]

I bless you, dear Father, and all your subjects.

BROTHER ALFONSO MARIA.

After the original preserved in the archives of our house at Pagani.

LETTER 767.

To Sister Maria Rosa Graziano, in the Monastery of the SS. Rosario.

He exhorts her to be patient amid contradictions.

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

ARIENZO, April 24, 1774.

I understand all that you tell me in your letter.

I regret that you entertain antipathy towards those religious that are annoying you in concert with the Superior, while you are able to merit much by bearing this persecution patiently.

The thing is done; let the past be forgotten; henceforth let calmness reign in your heart. Ask God's pardon for

eighteen years. From Naples he passed to our house at Ciorani, where he died in the odor of sanctity, in the month of April, 1795. Fourteen years later his body was found incorrupt.

1 Rector of the house at Ciorani.

2 In the process concerning the chaplaincy of Ciceri. See letter of March 31, 1772, vol. ii. of *Letters*, page 445.

3 Baron Nicola Sarnelli.

not having embraced this cross for the love of him, and pray to him without ceasing for those that have done you any wrong. Every time that you see them, recommend them to God, and say within yourself: *They are my Sisters, and God wishes that I should love them as myself; to please God, I will love my Sisters in spite of the devil.*

Hereafter be firm, and do not permit yourself to be any longer overcome by temptation; endeavor to obey punctually and cordially your Superior, and the others that may give you an order.

Ah! my dear Sister, if you wish to participate in the joys of heaven, you must possess many virtues, especially the virtue of humility. Hence, be humble in your behavior to your Sisters. I recommend you to God, that he may give you patience, and may fill you with love towards him and your neighbor.

As for the sacristy, which has been entrusted to your care, prepare yourself for this new cross. When the time comes to attend to it, say to the Superior: *I am not fit for this office; tell me, what do you wish that I should do?* Then you will have to bear with many reproaches and tribulations; but virtue consists *in bearing all in peace.* If, instead of suffering with patience, you become agitated, you will greatly please the devil and greatly displease Jesus Christ. On the contrary, when one loves God, one seeks something to suffer in order to please him.

Give my regards to your aunt and to your Superior. Ask them to recommend me to God; I will render them the same service.

I bless you, and pray you to recommend me to the Lord. Believe me, dear Sister,

Your very devoted servant,

ALFONSO MARIA,
Bishop of Sant' Agata.

After an old copy.

LETTER 768.

To a Superior of Nuns of his Diocese.

He orders that a separate building be constructed for the pupils.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

ARIENZO, May 23, 1774.

My Very Reverend Mother: I have learned with regret, that your monastery does not contain separate apartments for the pupils. This is, however, a condition expressly imposed by the faculties sent from Rome; without this, the faculties say, no pupil, whoever she may be, will be allowed to enter.

I have a profound veneration for your monastery, and much more, for your very worthy person; but I believe that I cannot in conscience place myself in opposition to what has justly been prescribed by Rome.

I pray you, therefore, to make up your mind to erect a special building for the pupils; for I cannot in conscience grant to young persons, who wish to enter among you, the necessary permission; and I should regret to be obliged to cause you any pain.

May you and your whole Community pray to the Lord for me, as I do for all of you.

I conclude by blessing you in the name of Jesus Christ.

Believe me, my very Reverend Mother,

Your very devoted servant,

ALFONSO MARIA,
Bishop of Sant' Agata.

After the original in possession of Cavaliere Rosetti, at Naples.

LETTER 769.

To Father Andrea Villani.

He makes an effort to save a vocation.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

ARIENZO, June 6, 1774.

My Dear Father Andrea: Father Telesca[1] has called upon me here, perfectly resigned. But I could not come to a decision, and I told him that I must first speak to you.

Be so kind as to come to see me as soon as possible. We may then also speak to him, and shall see, whether it be possible to set the broken limb. Let us try to recover this subject who was already lost to us.

He would be a useful subject, and could render services if he would reform; but herein lies the difficulty.

I, therefore, expect you, and if you cannot come now, point out the day on which you will be able to do so; we shall then treat of this and of several other affairs of which I have taken note.

I give you my blessing, and I remain . . . .

BROTHER ALFONSO MARIA.

After the original preserved in the archives of our house at Pagani.

[1] There were in our Congregation Domenico and Teodosi Telesca; they were natives of Avigliano, diocese of Potenza. The first, born November 20, 1739, made his profession, May 15, 1760, and died a holy death at Ciorani, June 30, 1761. The second, of whom mention is made in this letter, was born, January 5, 1739, made his vows, April 20, 1758, but unfortunately left the Institute, probably during the year 1774.

LETTER 770.

To Father Francesco Antonio de Paola.

Foundation at Ceprano.—A small theological work composed by the saint.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

ARIENZO, June 12, 1774.

I have received your last letter, dated June 5. I hoped it would announce to me the arrival of the Brief of confirmation.[1] But as it has not yet come, ask Mgr. [di Veroli] whether Mgr. Macedonio [2] has at least forwarded to the Pope the report of the Ordinary.

More than a month has now passed, and no answer from Rome has been received; but I do not believe that the Pope will recede from his decision, after the excellent report which was addressed to him by Monsignor.

However, had the Brief arrived, I should have regretted, if we had been obliged to go to Ceprano, when Don Arduino Ferrari was not there. The latter found it necessary to live at Rome for some time, in order to carry on a lawsuit, which he has now gained.

He has again written to me a very courteous letter. I have also answered him courteously, and I send you my answer, which you will please forward to him.

I do not direct this letter to Arpino, but to S. Cecilia [Scifelli] to which place, I hope, you have ere this retired, as the heats of summer have come and the time for missions is over. To give missions during the hot weather would be to risk the health of more than one subject; and when once a subject has trouble with his head, he can no longer render any service. In future take care to finish the missions at the beginning of June, or a few days later.

1 The Pontifical Brief authorizing the foundation at Ceprano.

2 Mgr. Vincenzo Macedonio was Secretary of Memorials.

I will follow your recommendation relative to the direction of letters; I will always write *Sora* only.

My work on the *Psalms* is nearly finished; as soon as it is ready, I will send it to you and to the bishop; but I do not know which courier to choose; because I do not know, whether the one of Naples goes so far as Sora, or, whether he stops at Naples; and I should not like the copies to be lost. I spoke to you about this in my last letter.

When you have finished the mission, I wish you to keep with you the two Fathers who are destined for Ceprano; you may write to the Father Vicar that I have given you permission to do so. If the foundation at Ceprano does not come to pass, they will be sent back to Nocera.

Let me know how Don Carlo, the Frenchman, is doing, and where he is.

Thank God, my head is better; but I have suffered much.

In the Heart of Jesus I bless you and every one of your subjects, one after the other.

When you see the bishop, give him my kind regards, and tell him that I will soon send him a translation of the Psalms. It has cost me a great deal of labor, and perhaps ruined my head forever.

With this translation, and under the form of an appendix to the volume, I will send you a little work of four leaves.[1] I have been obliged to send a reply to a certain Abate Magli, Canon of Martina (city in the province of Taranto). He has written much against the system that I sustain, namely: *a doubtful law is not obligatory*, because it is not sufficiently promulgated.

This Magli has invented a new system by which he tries

[1] This is a very important little work. It is entitled: "Exposition of the System Sustained by the Author regarding the Rule of Moral Actions; to which is joined an answer to some New Objections."

to refute my opinion. He says that my opinion is true, if there is question of a law which has for its origin the will of God; but that it is false, if there is question of a law founded on the very nature of man, that is, if there is question of natural right, which is habitually promulgated to man from his infancy. To refute these assertions clearly, I have been obliged to labor during seven months; for I had to refute them by reasons which I have not found in any Catholic work. Be it said between ourselves, the system and the reasoning of Magli are quite new and extravagant; but the author is subtle, and he has made me sweat.

I hope that Mgr. di Veroli will read this little work with pleasure.

I again bless you and all your subjects.

BROTHER ALFONSO MARIA.

After an old copy.

LETTER 771.

To the Same.

How and at what time he should take possession of the house at Ceprano.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

ARIENZO, June 27, 1774.

I believed, or rather, I hoped, that your next letter would bring me the news, that the Pope had confirmed the foundation at Ceprano; but the Lord has not willed to grant me this consolation.

However, I will never believe that, after the very favorable report of our Bishop [of Veroli], the Pope could have changed his mind. I believe rather that the Holy Father is not very well, or that he is greatly disturbed by the affairs of Spain. This last fact seems to me to be very

probable, for the Superior of the Chinese College [1] said so on his return from Rome.

The Pope, he said, was plunged in grief. This is, besides, quite natural, since there is not a shadow of hope that peace, which is so much desired, will be restored.

Your Reverence is right, when you say that, if the rescript should arrive from Rome during the dog-days, there would be no reason, why the Fathers should then go to live at Ceprano. In fact the air, my confrères tell me, is not of the best, though it is not bad, and it would be dangerous to go to live there, while the season is changing.

The heats being, therefore, very great, I with others are of opinion, that it is not prudent to go to live at Ceprano, should the rescript of the Pope arrive before the dog-days. The Fathers will wait till autumn, when no sudden change of the weather need be feared. The health of our brethren should be preferred to all other advantages.

If, however, the Pontifical rescript should arrive between this and then, the Fathers might go early in the morning on any day of the week, to take possession of the house, without, however, sleeping there in the afternoon. The Fathers will declare that they belong to the house of S. Cecilia [Scifelli], and two ends will thus be obtained at the same time. But, when there is question of going to live at Ceprano, I absolutely wish that my advice be first asked.

In the meantime, Reverend Father, keep yourself recollected in union with our Lord, for in the last campaign you labored much, perhaps even too much.

Send me news about Don Carlo, and as soon as you hear anything touching the affair of Ceprano, let me know it. Pray also for the Pope whose affliction is so profound. God knows how much I compassionate him in his sorrows.

I bless you and all your subjects, one after the other.

[1] Father Gennaro Fatigati.

Do not forget to tell me, by what courier I should send the copies of my new work, as soon as it is published.

BROTHER ALFONSO MARIA.

After the original preserved in the archives of Father General at Rome.

LETTER 772.

To the Same.

The saint shares the affliction of Pope Clement XIV.—The foundation at Ceprano.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

ARIENZO, July 23, 1774.

Mgr. Rosetti [1] lately arrived from Rome. As he keeps nothing secret from me, and is very well acquainted with affairs at Rome, he has confirmed what you told me at the end of your letter. Yes, the Pope is in extreme affliction, on account of the difficulties raised against him on the part of Sardinia, Spain, Naples, and above all, Venice.

He also feared death, which had been prophesied to him by a nun imprisoned in the castle of Santangelo.[2] According to what this nun said, he was to die on July 16; but the 16th has passed by and the Pope is not dead. Let us hope then, that God may preserve him for the holy Year and for many others.

I can only repeat: Poor Pope! poor Pope! Afflictions overwhelm him on all sides, and I am always praying to the Lord to help him.

It is not, therefore, astonishing that he does not dispatch any affairs, and that he even forbids any one to speak to

[1] Mgr. Niccolò Rosetti received episcopal consecration at Rome, July 3, of this year, and then went to Arienzo, his native place. It is thus that St. Alphonsus had the opportunity to hear him speak of the affairs at Rome.

[2] Bernardina Renza di Valentino, a pretended prophetess.

him. This is the reason why the affair of Ceprano is kept in suspense. Mgr. Macedonio probably does not dare to say a word to him about it.

The Pope continually keeps his room, and will not grant audience to any one. We must, therefore, pray in a special manner for him and for the Church.

Why, then, should we continue to urge Mgr. di Veroli? Let us wait till the Pope has somewhat recovered his tranquillity, and till he begins again to attend to affairs.

As for the companions whom you have with you, I compassionate you. But what will you do? You live a Community-life; there will always be subjects who will not walk on the right road. Consequently, we must have patience and prudence.

I send you a circular, which I have sent to the other houses. Read it and have it read in common on Thursday, when the greater part of your subjects are at home; it may take the place of the usual discourse.

Tell all that this foundation is new and situated in another kingdom. In all new foundations religious must suffer, and suffer much on account of poverty, but especially because they must treat with people with whom they are not much acquainted. Tell your Fathers to read what the saints have suffered in their first foundations; it is thus that they became saints before God.

It is well that you go from time to time to pay your respects to the French priest;[1] but do not press him to return soon.

My book has not yet appeared. As soon as I have it, I will send it by the courier of Sora, and to the address of Don Giovanni Marzani, in compliance with your wish.

Remind all your subjects, that they should in a special manner recommend me every day to Jesus Christ; for my

[1] L'Abbé Louis Arnauld.

death is near. Please, dear Father, pray particularly for this intention. I bless you and all your subjects, one after the other.

BROTHER ALFONSO MARIA.

After an old copy.

LETTER 773.

To the Fathers and the Brothers of the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer.

Recommendation relative to the love of Jesus Christ, to vocation, and to regular observance.

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

[ARIENZO,] July 29, 1774.

My dearest Brethren in Jesus Christ: The principal thing that I recommend to you is the love of Jesus Christ. Very much are we bound to love him.

For this end he has chosen us from all eternity, and called us into his Congregation, there to love him, and to make others also love him. What greater honor, what greater mark of love could Jesus Christ have shown us? He has snatched us from the midst of the world, in order to draw us to his love, and that, during the pilgrimage of this life, by which we must pass into eternity, we might think of nothing but of pleasing him, and of bringing those crowds of people to love him who, every year, by means of our ministry, abandon sin, and put themselves into the grace of God.

It is generally the case that, when we begin a mission, the greater number of the people of the place are at enmity with God, and deprived of his love; but five or six days have scarcely elapsed, when, behold, numbers, as if roused from a deep sleep, begin to listen to the exhortations, the instructions, and the sermons; and when they see that God offers them his mercy, they begin to weep over their sins,

and conceive the desire of being reconciled to him; the way of pardon is opened before them, and, seeing it, they begin to abhor the manner of life that they had previously loved; a new light begins to shine upon them, and a peace hitherto unknown touches their hearts. Then they think of going to confession, to remove from their souls those vices that have kept them separated from God; and whereas, before a Mass of a quarter of an hour appeared to them too long, and five decades of the Rosary too tedious, and a sermon of half an hour unbearable, now they gladly hear a second and a third Mass, and they are sorry when the sermon, which has lasted an hour and a half, or perhaps two hours, is over.

And of whom does the Lord make use, if not of us, to work such wondrous changes, and to bring the people to delight in those very things that before they despised, so that when the mission is over, we leave in the place to love Almighty God two or three thousand persons, who before were living at enmity with him, and were not even thinking of recovering his grace?

If, therefore, God so highly honors us as to choose us to be the instruments of his glory, and of bringing others to love him,—an honor that no monarch of the earth possesses,—how greatly ought we not to thank and love him! Let others labor to acquire the reputation of men of honor and of talent; but let us endeavor to advance every day more and more in the love of Jesus Christ, and to find occasions of pleasing him by offering to him some mortification, or some other act that will be acceptable to him.

And, if we wish to attach ourselves always more and more to the Heart of Jesus Christ, let us always put ourselves in the last place, and guard against wishing to appear. The more we try to live hidden among men, the more united do we become to Jesus Christ. A member of the Congregation would show too great ingratitude to Jesus Christ,

who should love him with reserve, and should neglect to live as strictly united to God as he might.

My Brethren, when death comes, the light of the candle will disclose to us the graces that the Lord has bestowed upon us, in keeping us in the beautiful vocation that he has given us.

I say the truth. I feel an extreme compassion, when I think of those that were once our brethren, and that lived in peace, and under obedience, united to God, and contented with everything that happened to them: and now they are in the midst of the world, in confusion and disturbance. They have, indeed, the liberty to go where they like, and to do as they like; but do what they may, all is without regularity, without interior spirit, and without quiet. From time to time, they will think of making meditation; but when their infidelity to God, and their ingratitude to him in having abandoned their vocation, stares them in the face, the remorse of conscience that they feel is too sharp; and hence it comes to pass that, in order to avoid the bitterness of that remorse, they often give up prayer; and so their lukewarmness and their disquiet of mind increase more and more.

Their misfortune did not begin with grievous faults, but with little defects; and the devil made use of these to bring them little by little to the loss of their vocation.

I repeat, I pity them from the bottom of my heart; for I am certain that their whole life is nothing but confusion and disquiet; and if their life is full of straits, much more so will be their death.

Some years ago I had hard work to comfort one of these, who at the thought of the loss of his vocation despaired, and cried out in a frenzy that he was damned, and that there was no salvation for him, because he had voluntarily lost his vocation.

Their misfortune, therefore, should make us be deter-

mined to suffer everything rather than the loss of vocation; and the first means is to avoid little faults, especially those against the Rules. He who makes no account of the Rules, makes no account of the love of Jesus Christ; and experience proves that he who commits a fault against the Rule with his eyes open, and especially if this fault is repeated, soon becomes dry and cold in the love of God.

You already know that the most efficacious means to enable us to bear contradictions, is a great love for Jesus Christ; but, for this very much prayer is necessary. To love Jesus Christ is the greatest work that we can perform on this earth; but it is a work and a gift that we cannot have of ourselves: it must come to us from him, and he is ready to give it to those who ask him for it; so that if we are wanting in it, it is through our own fault and our own negligence that we have it not. It was for this reason that the saints were continually occupied in prayer; and there was nothing to which they paid so great attention.

I am certain that Jesus Christ looks most lovingly on our little Congregation, and regards it as the apple of his eye; and experience shows us that in the midst of so many persecutions, he does not cease to allow us to promote more and more his glory in so many places, multiplying his graces towards us.

I shall not live to see it, because my death is nigh; but I have the most certain confidence that our little flock will always go on gradually increasing, not, indeed, in wealth and honors, but in promoting the glory of God, and in spreading by our labors a greater knowledge and love of Jesus Christ among others.

A day will come, as we may well hope, when we shall see ourselves all united together in that eternal home, never more to be separated from one another, and where we shall find united with us many hundreds of thousands of souls, who at one time did not love God, but who, brought back

to his grace by means of us, will love him, and will be for all eternity a cause of glory and gladness to ourselves. Should not this thought alone spur us on to give ourselves wholly to the love of Jesus Christ, and to making others love him?

I bless all and each in the name of the Most Holy Trinity, and I pray Jesus Christ, by his merits, to increase always in each one who is living, and shall hereafter live, in the Congregation, the gift of his divine love; so that, like the seraphim, all on fire with love, we may praise God for all eternity in heaven, and sing the mercies he has shown towards us.

Let us, moreover, never cease to recommend ourselves to the divine Mother, since the Lord gives us the honor and the joy of proclaiming everywhere her glories,—a source of much consolation to me, and which gives me a great hope that this good Mother will never cease to have a most special care for each one of us, and will obtain for us the grace to become saints.

I finish, but I could go on forever, from the desire that I have to see you all filled with love for Jesus Christ, and working for his glory; especially in these unhappy times, in which we see Jesus Christ so little loved in the world.

I am not alarmed by the fear of poverty, or of sickness, or of persecutions; the only thought that terrifies me is, lest any one of you should one day be seduced by some passion to leave the house of God, and should go into the midst of the world, as has happened to so many, who were once in the Congregation, and who now are out of it, and live without peace. And even if some of these should save their souls, they, nevertheless, will find that they have lost that beautiful crown which God had prepared for them in heaven, if they had persevered in their vocation.

Therefore, my dearest Brethren, let us always pray to

Jesus Christ, and to our Mother Mary, that God of his mercy may grant to us all the gift of perseverance.

I beg each one to recommend me especially to Jesus Christ, that I may have a good death, which I am expecting from day to day. I, miserable though I be, pray for each one of you many times during the day; and, having obtained my salvation, as I hope I shall, I will not cease to do the same for you in heaven, better than I do now.

Next, I recommend, in particular and first of all, the common acts and the three meditations. He who has little love for prayer, has little love for God; and when prayer is wanting, the religious spirit is wanting, good desires are wanting, and courage to make progress is wanting.

I recommend the spiritual reading, which is the inseparable companion of meditation.

I recommend the devout celebration of holy Mass, and that the divine Office be recited with the proper pauses, and without mixing up one verse with the other.

I recommend the love of poverty: consider, that in all our houses we live, as it were, by miracle; since, as you know, there is no fixed income. What little we have, is scarcely sufficient to make up four or five grains [1] for each one, and, indeed, does not amount to so much; so that each one must be satisfied with that little which he receives as a pure alms from God. It is a wonder to see how each day there is bread for every one upon the table.

I recommend silence. Where there is no silence, there is no recollection; and where there is no recollection, there is nothing but disturbances and sins. One of the greatest blessings, which we enjoy in the Congregation, is the silence; and he who breaks the silence, does harm to himself and to the others.

Next I recommend obedience to Superiors on the mis-

[1] From 17 to 21 *centimes*.

sions. Obedience keeps up the good order of the missions; and even when something, that the Superior orders, might be better arranged, nevertheless, when you obey punctually, and without murmuring, all goes well. God lends his aid, and the mission has a great success.

Moreover, let each one take care not to annoy his brethren with words and sharp expressions, which may wound charity; and, likewise, not to undertake any office on the missions, for which he was not designated by the Superior, without asking for it. How will God bless that exercise, which a subject has the pretension to do out of his own head? He who should have such pretensions, would deserve never again to go on missions. And this punishment will certainly be given to those that are rash enough to undertake some office to which they are not appointed. This submission is the cause of the success of our missions; but I have learned, to my very great sorrow, that on this point there has been some disorder.

I bless once more all of you, and each one in particular.

BROTHER ALFONSO MARIA.

After the original preserved in the archives of Father General at Rome.

LETTER 774.

To Don Michele N.

He recommends to him perfect conformity to the will of God.

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

ARIENZO, August 6, 1774.

My Dear Sir: I have read your letter, and truly I have nothing particular to say to you; for, as to the pious exercises, that unite the soul to God, such as prayer and the frequentation of the sacraments, you already practise them.

Take care always to keep yourself united to the will of God in all contrarieties.

Fiat voluntas tua! [May Thy will be done!] These are the words that have made all the saints. Ask without ceasing for *the love of God, perfect conformity to the divine will, and perseverance in prayer.*

Pray also for me, as I myself am praying for you and your family.

Believe me, my dear Sir,

Your very devoted and grateful servant,

ALFONSO MARIA,
Bishop of Sant' Agata.

After an old copy.

LETTER 775.

To Father Francesco Antonio de Paola.

He asks for information regarding the foundation at Ceprano.

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

ARIENZO, August 12, 1774.

I received this morning a letter from Father Grossi. The opinion of Father Vicar, he tells me (an opinion shared by Father Cimino), is, that before accepting the foundation at Ceprano, we should wait for the cession of the largest part of the property, namely, that of the Signori Caravotti, and not take our chances only with the part that belongs to Ferrari.

Please, my dear Father, give me some explanations on this point; for, in fact, if the part belonging to Ferrari were by itself too miserable, and if the whole revenue from the seminary, appropriated for our use, were to yield only the insignificant sum of fifty or sixty ducats, as that of S. Cecilia [Scifelli], this sum would scarcely suffice to support two

subjects, a Father and a Brother. Hence, I should make great difficulty in accepting the house at Ceprano.

But the idea first suggested to me by Cimino and Grossi was, that we should have (at least after a certain time) an assured income of about three hundred ducats, if I mistake not. Please, then, give me some explanation on this point; for, I see very well that the cession of the Signori Caravotti is uncertain; it is, therefore, not prudent to rest the foundation upon it.

This is all that I wish to say to you. I expect your answer, and I give you my blessing.

BROTHER ALFONSO MARIA.

After an old copy.

LETTER 776.

To the Same.

He rejoices at not being obliged to accept a foundation at Rome.—The Ceprano foundation.

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

ARIENZO, August 25, 1774.

I received your last letter.

I was very sure that at the present time no news could have come from Rome concerning Ceprano; for I learn from various quarters that the Pope is troubled, that he remains shut up in his apartments, and that he does not attend to any affairs. Let us, therefore, pray to God to deliver the Pope from this state of melancholy.

But this morning I received a note from Father Vicar, to the purport that Mgr. Macedonio is reported to have said to Terragnoli [1] that the Pope was thinking of intrusting to us the church of the Gesù at Rome, but that his advisers had dissuaded him from doing so.

Gloria Patri! What should we do in Rome? Fare-

[1] The lawyer Melchiorre Terragnoli.

well, then, to our work, farewell to our Congregation! We should all become courtiers.

Nevertheless, let us thank God for the good opinion that the Pope has of us. If Mgr. di Veroli, our bishop, should wish to urge Mgr. Macedonio a little to conclude the Ceprano affair, the occasion would be favorable.

Be then so kind, Reverend Father, as to tell me what I asked you in my last letter, namely: what revenues we should have at Ceprano without the cession of Signori Caravotti; for Father Andrea is of opinion that we should not accept this foundation, before having the cession of the Signori Caravotti; now the cession is a doubtful thing. Tell me, then, to what the revenue of Ceprano would be reduced without this cession.

I impatiently expect your answer, and I bless you.

BROTHER ALFONSO MARIA.

After an old copy.

LETTER 777.

To Father Andrea Villani.

The same subject.

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

[ARIENZO], August 25, 1774.

The news that you send me of Mgr. Macedonio gives me pleasure, since it indicates the good intentions that the Pope has in regard to us. But, let us thank God and the advisers of the Sovereign Pontiff, that the project was not carried out.

If the Pope had persisted in his intention,[1] I would have written him in strong terms that he should change his resolution, though I should thereby risk having the whole Congregation against me.

[1] Clement XIV., as we have seen, wished to intrust to our Institute the church of the Gesù.

What should we do at Rome? Such a thing would destroy our Institute; for, if our missions are once neglected, and the Institute diverted from its end, the Congregation would cease to exist. There would remain a monster with two heads, and what good purpose would it serve?

A thousand others at Rome could do what we should do; and, in the meantime, what would become of our work?

Our Congregation is made for the mountains and for the villages. As soon as we are placed among prelates, cavaliers, ladies, courtiers, good-bye to the missions, good-bye to country places! We should become courtiers ourselves. I pray to Jesus Christ to preserve us from such a misfortune.

However, let us thank God for the favorable opinion that the Pope has of us. . . .

Tannoia, "Life of St. Alphonsus," Book iii, Chapter li.

LETTER 778.

To Don Giacomo di Nuzzo, Parish Priest at Forchia.

He invites him to come to see him.

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

ARIENZO, August 30, 1774.

Reverend and Dear Sir: Come to see me without delay, come as soon as possible; we shall speak about the means of remedying the scandal that is given by Andreanella Valentino, of your parish.

Come without fail and promptly.

I bless you.

Yours very affectionately,

ALFONSO MARIA,
Bishop of Sant' Agata.

After the original found at S. Maria a Vico, in possession of D. Michele de Lucia.

LETTER 779.

To Mother Maria Raffaella della Carità, Superior of the Redemptoristines of Sant' Agata de' Goti.

He forbids her to return to Scala.

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

ARIENZO, September 3, 1774.

My Very Reverend Mother: I have read the two letters of the Bishop of Scala. Please to read that which I have addressed to him, then close it and forward it to him.

You will remark in my letter that the Pope, who is my Superior and that of the Bishop of Scala, has expressly ordained in his act of approbation that the three foundresses, and especially you who have been the chief one, shall continually reside at the new monastery of Sant' Agata, as long as the Bishop of Sant' Agata *shall think it necessary.*

Now, at the present time, this necessity is clear, and is evident to every one. I should believe myself guilty of mortal sin, if I permitted your departure under the present circumstances.

The Bishop of Scala writes that he feels obliged in conscience to order your return to Scala, by reason of the engagement that you have made to return thither, when there should be need of you.

But there is no mention made of this engagement in the Pontifical rescript, which I have before me, and I know not how the Bishop of Scala imagines that it exists. Even if this engagement existed, I would know how to induce the Pope to declare that it cannot be effective in the present case, since such a thing would compromise the very existence of the new house of Sant' Agata. This foundation would, therefore, be sacrificed, because of the neces-

sities of the house of Scala—necessities of which I know nothing.

I omit to mention other obvious reasons that I could adduce. I would have to draw up a special statement, in order to demonstrate that this necessity is not real, and that your presence could do little or nothing to remedy the evils that exist at Scala.

Hence, in order to free you from every scruple in regard to the command of the Bishop of Scala, I forbid you in a formal manner, under pain of a grievous sin, to think of going thither;—a grievous sin, from which you could not be excused, since it is evident that your departure would cause the ruin of this house.

The language, that your daughters have used, pierced my very heart, but did not surprise me, because they are still tender plants, and are but little grounded in virtue; do not, therefore, be astonished at the answer that I have addressed to them, for this answer is to serve as a correction.

Devote yourself to the cultivation of these young plants as long as God gives you life. I regret that your days cannot be greatly prolonged, since you are, like myself, advanced in age; but when we are gone, God will provide. We must, therefore, at the present time cultivate the vineyard that has been intrusted to us, so that it may become perfect; and God will do the rest.

I also entreat you to take care of your health. Now that the winter season is approaching, you must omit going to the choir in the morning, whenever you think that going there would probably aggravate the chest trouble from which you are suffering; and when you are in doubt, whether your presence there would hurt you much, remain away without scruple.

I herewith bless you; recommend me to Jesus Christ.

My life cannot last much longer; when I am dead my successor will act as he thinks fit. At present, you are under my jurisdiction according to what the Pope has declared; it is to me only that you owe obedience.

Believe me, my Reverend Mother,

Your very devoted servant,

ALFONSO MARIA,
Bishop of Sant' Agata.

After the original preserved in the archives of Father General at Rome.

LETTER 780.

To the Redemptoristine Nuns of the Convent of Sant' Agata de' Goti.

He re-assures them in their fears and exhorts them to the love of Jesus Christ.

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

ARIENZO, September 3, 1774.

My very Dear Daughters and Sisters in the Lord: Do not fear; I have written to Mother Maria Raffaella, and have formally forbidden her, under pain of grievous sin, to leave the monastery.

Be assured, therefore, as long as I live, I will not consent that she should depart; and if the Bishop of Scala obtained an order from the Pope, to make her return to Scala, I should know how to take measures to have the order revoked; for the reigning Pontiff listens to me and is very favorable towards me.

When I am dead, and this may be expected soon, God will take care of you.

In the meantime, think only of obeying your Mother, of sanctifying yourselves, and of becoming more closely united to Jesus Christ.

I feel compassion for you for the words that have escaped

you on this occasion; but your words, you must know, pierced my very heart.

What would you do, if God should call to a better life your Mother, who is advanced in age and very feeble in health? Would you then repeat the fine words that you have spoken?

You should always be disposed to accept the things that God arranges, to love him, and never to cease being entirely devoted to him, even if the Turks should come, should kill your Mother, and should destroy the monastery.

All that God does, is good.

What has been the conduct of the martyrs? They were always ready to lose all, even life itself, in order not to abandon Jesus Christ. Let each one of you pray to him every day for me; I give you the command to do so, since I am so near death; moreover, you should love Jesus Christ very much. To the one that loves Jesus Christ much, every pain, every sorrow, every infirmity, is sweet and agreeable. The love of Jesus Christ makes sweet all the afflictions of this life, and even death itself.

I conclude by blessing each one of you specially, and I pray Jesus Christ to inflame you all with his holy love, so that you may think only of loving and pleasing him, and that at every moment and in all your actions you may only occupy yourself with Jesus Christ, address to him acts of love, speak to him, and desire without ceasing soon to go to see him in Paradise, there to love him with all your strength and during all eternity.

Believe me always,

Your very devoted servant,

ALFONSO MARIA,

Bishop of Sant' Agata.

After an old copy.

LETTER 781.

To a Parish Priest of Sant' Agata.

Charity of the saint towards the poor.

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

ARIENZO, September 3, 1774.

You ask me to assist N. N., who is poor, by granting him a monthly allowance; but you know that I must, before all, help the poor of my diocese, the number of whom has so increased, that I no longer know how I can relieve them.

Nevertheless, ask in my name Canon Gioacchino di Cesare to give this man four *carlini* a month. I will keep an account of this sum and return it with interest.

Since Sabetta [Elisabetta Conti] has gone back to your parish, tell her from me that, if she behaves well, and if I hear no more unpleasant news about her, I will give her six *carlini*[1] a month. I will, however, not assign them to her at present, for I wish first to assure myself of her perseverance.

Keep an eye upon her, and in future let me be carefully informed of all that she does.

I bless you, etc.

After the Roman edition.

[1] 2.25 frs.

LETTER 782.

To Father Francesco Antonio de Paola.

He asks for information before accepting the foundation of Ceprano.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

ARIENZO, September 5, 1774.

I received your last letter, dated August 21.

The difficulty in regard to Ceprano lies not in the climate, but in the fact that there is no way of living, if the Caravotti do not make that concession of land. Now it is doubtful, whether they will do this, and without such a concession, we should have for revenue only a few ducats. This I already told you in my last letter, and I await your answer, in order to know what revenue is assured us; otherwise I really cannot accept this foundation, since all our confrères are most strongly opposed to it.

That no news about Ceprano has been received from Rome is not surprising; for the Pope is afflicted and transacts no business.

As for missions, you can, it appears, give few of them this year, since you must accompany Monsignor in his pastoral visits; but we must obey the bishop and the order of the Pope. You may, however, do good during these visits, for you will remain at least three days in each place; and who will prevent you from giving here and there a little mission in those places that have not yet had the exercises?

Enough about this point; have an understanding with the bishop whom, according to the Rule, we are obliged to obey.

I bless you and all your subjects.

BROTHER ALFONSO MARIA.

After an old copy.

LETTER 783.

To Father Benedetto Gessari, Dominican.

Missions to be given in the diocese of S. Agata.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

ARIENZO, September 7, 1774.

Reverend and Dear Father: I have received a letter from your much respected Father Prefect. I am, at the same time, in receipt of a letter from your Reverence, and I thank you for the trouble that you have taken on my account.

Father Prefect writes that he allows me a month for the two missions of Sant' Agata and Airola. This favor affords me great pleasure; but I have written to Father Prefect that, if the mission began on Monday, November 12, nearly all the days of this week till Sunday would be lost. Experience proves, indeed, that, if a mission is begun on a working-day, few people come to the church before the following Sunday.

I formerly made the same mistake; but since that time I have made a vow never more to begin missions on a working-day.

Try then, Reverend Father, to comply with the desire, which I have already expressed to you, and send me the preachers at least two days before the Sunday. In any case, let them come a day in advance, but two days would be better, for then they might stay a day in my house, at Arienzo. But if, after leaving Naples, you wish to go to Sant' Agata, or to Airola, you are perfectly free to do so.

A favor, Reverend Father, I would most earnestly ask of you is, that in these two cities a mission also be given for the hamlets depending on them, as they are large

places. At all events, a mission should be given in the environs of Airola, and is usually given in a place far from the city, that is, in the village of Moiano, where all the inhabitants of the neighboring hamlets meet together.

You say that your idea is, *after leaving S. Agata, to go to S. Maria a Vico, then to Airola.* Would to God, Reverend Father, that such a thing would be possible. But Father Prefect is of a different opinion; and, on the other hand, in order to preach at S. Maria a Vico, I should not like you to omit evangelizing the hamlets, at least, as I have said, that of Moiano, which is the large hamlet of Airola. For, after all, as to S. Maria a Vico, I will try to provide by applying to the Dominican Fathers of the convent of the *Santa*, since I know not to whom else to apply.

You tell me, finally, that, having once arrived here, you would try whether you could evangelize still another place. Ah! my very dear Father Benedetto, would to God that such a thing might be done! for I frankly declare to you, that this year I have been really disappointed. I had arranged the order of the missions for my diocese in concert with your Fathers, that is, with the predecessors of Father Provincial and Father Prefect. I was then without anxiety, and I asked for no other missionary bands, and now it is impossible to secure a single band, all having been engaged. May God fulfil your desire! But, how can I hope that several missions will be given, when we have no more than a month before us? However, I repeat, may it be God's will that such a thing may be done!

As for the necessary preparations for the missions, of which Father Prefect has spoken, be without uneasiness. I am going at once to have the churches, beds, etc., put in order.

Pray to Jesus Christ for me, and please accept the expression of profound respect with which I have the honor to be, my dear Father. . . . .

After the Roman edition.

LETTER 784.

To Father Francesco Antonio de Paola.

He asks him to forward a confidential letter to a subject.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

[The year 1774.]

(*Confidential letter.*)

The enclosed letter has been addressed by me to Father Cimino. Read it, and then give it to that Father, if he is with you; if he is not with you, address it and send it to him.

Do not tell others, that the letter contained a discourteous answer from Cardinal Carafa; for you would discourage them. May God have us in his keeping!

But I hope, that all that this Cardinal says, is not true. He simply wished to spare himself the annoyances this affair creates, and, therefore, he answered in so bad a humor. May God make him a saint!

Send me some news about your affairs.

I bless you and all your subjects.

BROTHER ALFONSO MARIA.

After the original preserved in the house of Father General at Rome.

LETTER 785.

To the Same.

Death of Clement XIV.—The Ceprano affair.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

ARIENZO, October 3, 1774.

You also write to me about Father de Cunctis, but do not be troubled; the matter has been decided, he will return hither as soon as the Fathers have arrived at your place.

I greatly praise your charity and your patience in regard to him, and I am very happy that you are satisfied with the other Fathers.

I do not know which subject Father Vicar has destined for this place; I have left the matter with him.

As for the Ceprano affair, it is useless for Monsignor to go to Rome, since the Pope is dead.[1] The con-

[1] Clement XIV. died, September 22, miraculously assisted at his death by St. Alphonsus. The following is the narration of this extraordinary fact, as given by Father Tannoia:

"In the morning of the 21st of September, 1774, after Alphonsus had finished Mass, contrary to custom, he threw himself into his arm-chair; he was depressed and silent; he made no movement of any kind, never articulated a word, and said nothing to any one. He remained in this state all that day and all the following night, and during all this time he took no nourishment and did not attempt to undress. The servants, on seeing the state in which he was, did not know what was going to happen, and remained near the door of his room, but no one dared to enter.

"On the morning of the 22d, he had not changed his position; and no one knew what to think. The fact was, that he was in a prolonged ecstacy. Suddenly, as if he had been roused from a profound sleep, he rang the little bell to announce that he wished to say Mass. This signal was answered by Brother Francesco Antonio, according to custom, and at the same time, all the people in the house hurried to him with eagerness. On seeing so many people, the bishop asked with surprise what was the matter. 'What

cession made by the Sovereign Pontiff in favor of Ceprano has not been annulled by any contrary order; the bishop can, therefore, freely assign the revenue.

The only difficulty that remains, is this: will Caravotti give up a part of the land, and will this concession be temporary or permanent?

Let us behave well, and Jesus Christ will protect us; do not cease to repeat this to those around you. But, if we commit faults, he will abandon us, wherever we may be.

In case of suppression, we may take refuge at S. Cecilia [Scifelli] and Benevento.

I bless you, my dear Father, and all your subjects.

I conclude with a very important matter. As soon as Father Capuano reaches your house, hand him the letter from me, which you will receive from Father Cimino. Give it to him immediately.

BROTHER ALFONSO MARIA.

After the original preserved in the archives of Father General at Rome.

is the matter?' they replied, 'you have neither spoken, nor eaten anything for two days, and you ceased to give any signs of life.' 'That is true,' replied Alphonsus, 'but you do not know that I have been with the Pope, who has just died.' In fact, it was soon learned that Pope Clement XIV. had passed to a better life, on September 22, about eight o'clock in the morning, at the very moment, when Alphonsus came to himself." (*Tannoia*, "Life of St. Alphonsus," bk. iii. chap. lv.)

This fact was examined and proved in the process of the beatification of the saint. See *Positio super virtut. Responsio ad animadversiones R. P. Promotoris*, p. 125.

LETTER 786.

To Father Andrea Villani.

Solicitude of the saint to save the vocation of a subject.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

ARIENZO, October 8, 1774.

I have, without hesitation, told Father Giovanni [Lauria] that he is not obliged to return home, and that neither the temporal, nor the spiritual wants of his family oblige him to do so.

It is useless for me to write you all that I have told him. Ask him to repeat to you everything; he will tell you all.

If the reasons in favor of his stay with his family—a stay that must either be perpetual or last for a good many years—if, I say, these reasons were valid, perhaps most of our members would be obliged to leave the Congregation.

Here is what St. Thomas says (and I have given the text to Father Giovanni to read): *Even in the case where a father and a mother are reduced to a grave necessity by the absence of their son, the latter, if bound by the vow of perseverance, is not obliged to break his vow by going to assist his parents; he cannot even do this in conscience.* How much more is this true, if there is question of distant relatives!

After all that has been said and done, one might have recourse to the following means of quieting Father Giovanni in regard to the temporal wants of his family, which appear to be more pressing than the spiritual wants (for the nephew, nineteen years of age, is a bad young man who will hardly amend, even with his uncle at his side; and as for the nieces, no one is obliged to abandon his vocation, in order to dispose of them in marriage); I say, one could, finally, in order to free him from all anxiety, permit him to

give his family the *honorarium* of the Mass that he celebrates.

I have not yet spoken to him about this; I say it only to you, my dear Father, so that you may grant this favor to him, if you think it necessary, in order to calm him. Father Giovanni is, indeed, a very valuable subject to the Congregation; hence he deserves, more than others, a privilege, which in the past has already been allowed to several.

You must let me know, what you have decided to do in this case.

But, here is something that is more important. It seems to me that you should at once appoint as Master of novices, Father Garzia, and take Father Giovanni with you to the mission at Taranto. For this last measure there are a thousand good reasons: the mission will distract him from the cares of his family, and, besides, he will no more receive letters from home; you will then order all the letters, sent by his relatives, to be forwarded to you, and will not say a word to him about them.

I also wish, that, even after the mission at Taranto, you should always keep him with you, or that you should send him as Superior to other missions. Such is my opinion.

I bless you, my dear Father, and all your subjects.

BROTHER ALFONSO MARIA.

[*P. S.*] I have told Father Giovanni to write to his family these words: *I am dead; think no longer of me.* The more briefly he writes, the better it will be.

I send with him two copies of my new work on the *Psalms;* I positively forbid that they should be given to others outside of the house, for whatever reason.

I send another copy with ornamented binding; have it forwarded to Canon de Simone.

If afterwards you receive from Naples two other copies

of the *Psalms*, sent by Brother Michele [Ilardo], have them transferred to me immediately, for I have had only a small number of them printed.

Send me Father Grossi and Father Carbone to regulate the missions. Five Fathers are too many; four of them are sufficient, for I can count upon obtaining some good priests here.

After the original preserved in the archives of Father General at Rome.

LETTER 787.

To Father Bartolomeo Mattia Corrado, Rector of the House at Ciorani.

Answer in reference to the practice of poverty.

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

ARIENZO, October 10, 1774.

I have read your letter about handkerchiefs, snuff-boxes, and a third habit.

You write me that there are different views held by your subjects.

As for two simars, I think that they are absolutely forbidden in all the houses, and you may say that such is my order. As regards handkerchiefs and snuff-boxes, correct the abuse as you think best. You may permit them to use whatever is already in the hands of the subjects, but do not grant this in future.

Moreover, it appears difficult, that for the articles that are destroyed by use, one can adopt and maintain in all the houses a uniform rule applicable to all the subjects.

The poor, such as we are, make use of whatever they can

get; but we should receive everything from the hands of the Minister. It is a great abuse, to wish to retain an article, that one has procured for one's own use. Even if one receives it as a present, it should be given to the Rector or to the Minister. It would also be well, never to allow the subjects to use the things that have been given to them in particular, and even much less, those things that they have procured for themselves.

I bless your Reverence and the whole Community.

After the Roman edition.

LETTER 788.

To Father Andrea Villani.

Answer given to Father Mazzini.—Mission at Foggia.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

ARIENZO, October 13, 1774.

Father Mazzini, who has again been attacked by headache and fever, earnestly begs me to assign Nocera as the place of residence of Father de Cunctis.

I answered him as follows: "The care of assigning to the Fathers their place of residence concerns Father Villani, and I have nothing to do with that matter. Father de Cunctis may, therefore, remain at Nocera, but then he should do whatever Father Vicar may decide."

We are living in troublous times; let us then have patience.

You are going, it appears, to give a mission at Foggia. Remember that the mission will require at least fifteen subjects. Do the best you can. It is quite possible that the Mgr. of Taranto will keep you in his diocese during the whole of the carnival.

May we do what is most pleasing to God!

I bless you, my dear Father, and all your subjects.

BROTHER ALFONSO MARIA.

After the original preserved in the archives of Father General at Rome.

LETTER 789.

To Father Francesco Antonio de Paola.

He encourages him to discharge well the office of Superior.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

ARIENZO, October 13, 1774.

I have received your letter, and rest assured that I believe all that you tell me. I knew, when I wrote you, that the state of your health was bad; but I merely wished to induce you to do whatever you can. One must, I know it, in dealing with subjects, at the present time, have the patience of a saint. Even then one does not succeed in satisfying them. I pity the poor Superiors! But, what can we do? Let us steer the vessel as well as we can.

However, if it is necessary to inflict punishment, above all for certain faults that give scandal, we must inflict it, happen what may; so much the worse for the guilty ones. If we do not punish them, God will punish them.

Father Capuano will soon be with you. On his arrival give him the confidential letter that I have sent him; and if, perchance, this letter has not yet come to hand, give him that which I send you enclosed; its contents are the same, only they are more briefly stated.

I bless you.

BROTHER ALFONSO MARIA.

[*P. S.*] Keep me informed of any important event that may happen at your place.

After an old copy.

LETTER 790.

To Canon Giuseppe Simioli, at Naples.

He furnishes him with information.—He expresses the hope of seeing him one day a Cardinal.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

ARIENZO, October 20, 1774.

Very Reverend and Dear Sir: I have received your much esteemed letter concerning the priest, D. Benedetto de Sanctis.

It is true, this priest is from Airola, and he belongs to my diocese. His morals are good, and it was I who ordained him priest; but I know not, whether he possesses knowledge sufficient to hear confessions and to be an assistant. I hardly found him capable of being invested with the priesthood. I ordained him priest only on account of his good conduct; he showed himself very weak in his examination for jurisdiction. It may be that he studied afterwards; but I attest only what I know.

I learn, my dear Canon, that you will probably go to Rome; I hope then to see you one day wearing a cassock of another color.[1]

In speaking thus, I, by no means, desire to wound your modesty and your humility. I simply express a desire that I wish to see realized for the good of the Church. It is said that, at present, in the whole Sacred College there is not a theologian among the Cardinals.

Learned Cardinals are necessary to the Church, for they must assist and counsel the Head of the Church. But, I repeat, I wish in no wise to wound your humility.

However, if you go to Rome, do not forget me in your Mass, and ask Jesus Christ to grant me the grace of a

[1] Canon Simioli was a very learned professor of the University of Naples.

happy death. My end is near; and if you go to Rome, you will on your return surely not find me among the living.

Please accept, my very dear Canon, the expression of profound respect, with which I have the honor to be,

Your very devoted and grateful servant,

ALFONSO MARIA,
Bishop of Sant' Agata.

After an old copy.

LETTER 791.

To Don Traiano Trabisonda.[1]

He hints at the abuses that should be reformed in the Church, and the qualities that should be possessed by the Pope, whose election is at hand.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

ARIENZO, October 24, 1774.

My very Dear Sir: You desire to know my opinion regarding the present affairs of the Church, and the elec-

[1] This important letter was elicited by Cardinal Castelli, who wished to use it in the conclave, destined to give a successor to Pope Clement XIV. "This prince of the Church," says Father Tannoia, "knew what credit Alphonsus enjoyed on account of his sanctity, and what authority it had assured him on the part of the Cardinals. He, therefore, determined, that before the conclave began, the saint should point out in a letter, which would be regarded as having been written by a friend, the principal abuses, the removal of which should be followed up, and the other points that should be taken into consideration in the election of the new Pope. The Cardinal solicited this letter that he might produce it in the conclave, and thus cause the election of a Pontiff, such as the circumstances demanded. Alphonsus was covered with confusion by such a request. Nevertheless, his zeal for the glory of God and his desire to oblige a Cardinal, whom he so highly esteemed, made him accept the proposition, and, after having recommended himself to God, he wrote on October 23, 1774, the following letter." (*Tannoia*, bk. iii. ch. lv.)

tion of a new Pope; yet, what opinion can be expected from an ignorant old man, such as I am, of a man whose understanding is so very limited?

I would only say: We must pray and pray much; for, all classes of society, without exception, have fallen into such relaxation, and into such disorders, that no science, no human prudence can furnish a remedy to the evils that desolate the Church: the all-powerful arm of God is needed.

Among the bishops there are but few that are animated with a true zeal for the salvation of souls.

As for the religious Communities, nearly all, and let us even say, all of them, are relaxed; for, the present general disorder that reigns, has caused a decay of observance in the bosom of religious Orders, and ruined obedience among them.

As for the state of the secular clergy, it is still worse; hence, it is absolutely necessary that a general reform should be begun among all ecclesiastics. Then only can be healed the frightful corruption of morals that prevails among seculars.

On account of all these reasons, we must pray to Jesus Christ that he may give us as the Head of his Church, a man, less remarkable by his science and human prudence, than by his fervor and his zeal for the honor of God; a man, absolutely inaccessible to every intrigue, who is above all human respect. For, if we have the misfortune to have a Pope elected, who is not a man that seeks only the glory of God, the Lord will aid us but little, and in the present state of things all will go from bad to worse.

Prayer, then, is the only remedy that can heal evils so great, by obtaining from God that he may intervene and himself heal our wounds.

I have, therefore, written to all the houses of our humble

Congregation, and have enjoined upon them to pray with more than ordinary fervor for the election of a new Pope. I have, moreover, ordered all the secular and regular priests of my diocese, to say during Mass the prayer *Pro electione Pontificis;* I should wish that the Lord might inspire the Sacred College to impose the recitation of this prayer upon all the priests of the world through the nuncios in all the Catholic kingdoms. Such is the advice that can be given by a miserable man like myself.

Besides, I myself pray, and several times a day, in behalf of this election of the Pope; but what can my poor prayers avail? Nevertheless, I place all my trust in the merits of Jesus Christ and of the Blessed Virgin, and I hope that the Lord will grant me the consolation of seeing before my death, the Church delivered from all these evils. My death is, however, very near, to judge by my advanced age and the infirmities with which I am afflicted.

A few words more. As much as yourself, my dear friend, I would like to see disappear the innumerable abuses that reign at the present time, and a thousand thoughts on this subject come to my mind; these I should wish to communicate to you. But, when I consider my nothingness, I have not the courage to announce them, in order not to have the appearance of wishing to reform the world. Yet, I will speak to you in all confidence, and for my own relief, I will express to you my desires.

I would desire, in the first place, that the future Pope should choose among the subjects, that are proposed to him for the cardinalate (and the vacancies are many at this moment), that he should choose, I say, those that are the most learned and, at the same time, the most zealous for the interests of the Church. He should even in the first letter that he writes to the princes, to announce his election, inform them in advance that they should propose to him for

the cardinalate only those who are of tried piety and learning; without this, he should add, he cannot in conscience confirm their choice.

I would also desire that he should firmly refuse to confer benefices upon those that are already sufficiently provided with ecclesiastical goods, and who can conveniently live according to their state. He should on this point baffle every intrigue with sovereign energy.

He should also, in my opinion, repress extravagance in prelates, and determine for all (else nothing can be remedied) the number of persons, whom they may have as servants, as many of them as would be suitable for each rank of prelates: so many *valets*, and not more; so many servants, and not more; so many horses, and not more. This will be the means of reducing the heretics to silence.

He should also show himself more severe in the conferring of benefices, by granting them not to ordinary individuals, but only to those that have served the Church.

It is on the bishops that chiefly depend, both the religion of the people and the salvation of souls. He must, therefore, be extremely attentive when there is question of appointing them, and must obtain information on all sides, whether the candidates join to good morals the knowledge necessary to govern a diocese. If there is question of bishops already in office, the metropolitans and others should be obliged secretly to denounce those that occupy themselves too little with their flock.

He should also, in my opinion, boldly proclaim that negligent bishops, that fail in their duty as to residence, as to the too great a number of servants, or as to useless expenses incurred in the purchase of furniture, in feasting, and the like, shall be suspended or temporalily replaced by vicars apostolic. And from time to time, he must make an example according as is needed. An example of this kind would oblige all negligent prelates better to regulate their conduct.

I should also wish that the future Pope would not easily grant certain favors that enervate good discipline; for example, to permit nuns to leave their enclosure, when they solicit this permission merely through a desire of seeing the curiosities of the world. He should also not readily consent to the secularization of religious, on account of the evils that result from such a practice.

I would desire, above all, that the Pope would recall all religious, without exception, to the primitive observance of the Rules of their Institute, at least on all important points.

But I will not try your patience any longer. We can do nothing more than to pray to the Lord to give us a Pontiff who is filled with the spirit of God, and who is best adapted to procure the glory of Jesus Christ, and can bring about the reforms of which I have sketched an outline.

Please accept, Reverend Sir, and dear friend, the expression of my very humble respect and entire submission, with which I have the honor to be,

Your very devoted and grateful servant,

ALFONSO MARIA,
Bishop of Sant' Agata de' Goti.

After the original preserved at Florence in the professed house of the Pious Schools.

LETTER 792.

To Don Michele N.

He gives him salutary advice.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

ARIENZO, November 1, 1774.

My Dear Michele: I have at present a severe catarrh, which troubles me a great deal. Pray to God for me; I will not omit to pray to him for you, for your father, for your whole family.

Many thanks for the craw-fish that you have sent me; this act of kindness has afforded me great pleasure. I shall be happy to oblige you in return.

I hope that you desire to become a saint. Be patient and submissive amid all adverse circumstances, do the will of God, do not omit your ordinary exercises of piety, keep yourself united with God, and firmly hope that you will attain sanctity. The Lord will bless your good intention.

Please give my regards to your father, and accept the acknowledgment of my profound consideration.

Your very devoted and grateful servant,

ALFONSO MARIA,
Bishop of Sant' Agata.

[*P.S.*] I send you herewith a little work. You will find it full of faults; but the booksellers directed the printing of it; and I am obliged to correct it continually.

After an old copy.

LETTER 793.

To Father Andrea Villani.

He states his desire of resigning the episcopate, and the reasons that appear to him to militate for and against resignation.

[ARIENZO], November 9, 1774.

The thought of resigning the episcopate has returned to me.

Read this letter attentively, and recommend the affair to the Lord, because I do not wish to follow my own will, but to do what is pleasing to God; hence, I wish to act under obedience. For the present, there is no need of speaking about this matter; I will wait till a new Pope is elected.

On the one hand, the government of my diocese fills me with very great fear. Sick and paralytic, as I am, I cannot

make my pastoral visits; scruples beset me on all sides, and I am in perpetual uneasiness. I, therefore, should like to return to die in the Congregation, as I have only a few days to live.

On the other hand, if it is really impossible for me to make my pastoral visits, I believe that my Vicar-General can adequately take my place.

Besides, notwithstanding my infirmities and my weakness, my head is still clear, and my letters, it seems to me, sufficiently supply my presence. I have, besides, a watchful eye upon all the disorders that are to be remedied.

I am carefully attentive to extirpate every wicked intercourse, and for this purpose invoke the aid of the magistrates and of the police. My priests fear me, for I punish in accordance with justice. The seminary, the examination of the candidates for ordination, are objects of my attention, and all those, whom I have ordained, are capable of hearing confessions and of taking care of parishes. As for benefices, I confer them on the most worthy, after having taken a thousand precautions. Finally, I am very particular in regard to the monasteries of nuns, so that all may walk in the right path.

If I speak to you thus, I do not do so through vanity, but merely for the purpose of submitting the whole case to your consideration.

I also think that I can better serve the interests of the Congregation by remaining in my charge, than in leaving it. Here arises my perplexity. On the one hand, I should like to take some rest; on the other hand, it seems to me that, when I retire, I shall not do one half of what I am doing as a bishop. I must, however, acknowledge that, when I have once returned to one of our houses, I may be useful to the subjects, particularly to the young men; and this is what perplexes me.

I recommend myself to God, and I beg you, my dear

Father, to recommend to him this affair; for on your return, and when the new Pope has been elected, we shall examine the whole matter with Mgr. Borgia, in order to adopt a definitive resolution.

In the meantime, I shall take measures to have all the missions in my diocese finished this winter. On your return we shall speak about all that, for I only wish to do the will of God.

I bless you, my dear Father, and all your subjects.

Tannoia, Book iii. Chapter lxxiii.

LETTER 794.

To the Same.

Favorable news from Sicily.—Circumspection of the saint.

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

ARIENZO, November 9, 1774.[1]

I have just received from Naples a letter, which gives me good news concerning the affairs of Girgenti.[2] This news affords me the greatest consolation; for much good is done in that country, and still more will be accomplished, now that the storm has passed and things can be put on a better footing; all this will be for the glory of God, and this should be our only desire.

However, let Father Blasucci not imagine that I am going to send back the Fathers at once; for I wish first to set things in order, so that we may not become involved in the same difficulties, from which we have just escaped. May God's will be done, even if we should die!

I beg of you not to expose yourself to the danger of contracting any disease by wishing to hasten your return,

[1] The date makes one believe that this letter is a fragment or postscript of the preceding letter.

[2] The royal decree, which recalled our Fathers to Sicily appeared in fact on the 3d of the following December.—*Tannoia*, bk. ii.

or travelling in rain or snow. Take a conveyance that you may travel comfortably. Have a care of your health, for this is at present very necessary; my days are numbered and I must soon go to my grave.

I bless you, dear Reverend Father, and all your subjects.

After the Roman edition.

LETTER 795.

To Brother Michele Ilardo, at Naples.

He charges him with various commissions.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

ARIENZO, November 14, 1774.

Carry immediately the enclosed letter to Don Gaetano Vitolo, at the archiepiscopal chancery of Naples. Go there in the morning, in order to find him; otherwise you will have to carry it to his residence, in one of the houses of the Signori Viola, in the street *della Madonna delli Setti Dolori*.

I bless you.

Tell Father Blasucci that I wish to know what is the news at present from Girgenti.

Carry at once the enclosed letter to Don Ercole. It is not the writing of Brother Francesco [Romito], because he is confined to his bed; I had it written by some one else.

BROTHER ALFONSO MARIA.

After the original preserved in the archives of Father General at Rome.

LETTER 796.

To Father Andrea Villani.

He speaks about the affairs of the Congregation. — Doubts that beset him concerning the resignation of the episcopate.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

[ARIENZO, November 1774.]

I am altogether of your opinion.

It was only last evening that I had a conversation with my Vicar-General [Giovanni Nicola Rubini]; and I begged him to write to his brother Pasquale Rubini, not to say another word to Canelli about the decree (for he had spoken to him about it), and to let the matter rest. I do not wish that there should be any more said about it; for we have on hand that affair of Vargas, and Vargas will drag with it that of Invitto.

May God make a saint of Father Maione! He did not even leave me suspect that the Chamber had been charged with issuing this first decree. Had I known this, I would not have composed a new memorial.

The following are the circumstances under which I drew up this memorial. The secretary of Tanucci, who is very much in the good graces of his master, arrived here; he induced me to compose it; I did so and gave it to him, in order to prove to Tanucci that it is by no means true that we possess seventy thousand ducats, as he has been made to understand, but that, on the contrary, we are not far from dying of hunger. I afterwards sent in a petition to obtain permission to gather alms; and what do you think Tanucci did? He insisted upon again examining whether we have made any purchase! May God make them all saints!

You are right; I believe with you that we should not

rest our hopes on the decree that the Chamber is to issue; for the Chamber has to unravel the question in regard to our purchases, and thus we would again become involved in the ordinary disputes. I say then with you and in the same words: *It is better to remain as we are, and God will help us.*

I hoped that your answer would have transmitted to me the opinion of Mgr. Borgia concerning my resignation; but you do not say a word on the subject. Please, then, inform me whether you have received the long letter that I have written to you on this question; if it has not reached you, I will write again. In that letter I explained to you the motives that appeared to me to require a prompt solution, and I begged you to submit them to Mgr. Borgia.

His Lordship, I remember, saw in the bad state of affairs an obstacle to my project; but these affairs of the crown are at present so confused (I asked you to write this to Monsignor) that peace is very far from being concluded. Why then should we wait longer? The more so, since it appears that Simioli went so far as to say, that at my age and with my infirmities I gave a kind of scandal by not resigning my office.

If, then, you have not written to Mgr. Borgia, write to him now, and send him a messenger; I will pay the expenses. I ardently long for the moment of my deliverance; but this desire of rest makes me fear that I am not doing the will of God.

I bless you, my dear Father, and all your subjects.

Above all, if it is decided that I should send in my resignation, it will be necessary that we have an interview with each other; for I have many things to tell you, particularly in regard to the missions. I would wish to have all the missions given before I leave my diocese, so as to be free from all disquietude.

Your sojourn here would, moreover, favor the rees-

tablishment of your health, for the change of air would be better than all remedies. But once more, I am astonished that you do not say a word about these matters in your last letters. Now write to me without delay by way of Naples.

BROTHER ALFONSO MARIA,
of the Most Holy Redeemer.

After a copy.

LETTER 797.

To a Nun.

He consoles her in her infirmities and gives her some advice.

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

ARIENZO, December 1, 1774.

I have read your letter in which you tell me about all your infirmities, and I must say that these console me; because I see in them a proof that God loves you.

Abandon yourself, then, to the divine will, either for life or for death.

In all difficulties that present themselves, depend entirely on obedience; this is the surest way of pleasing God.

I will not leave off recommending you to God; please to pray also for me, for I am now seventy-seven years of age, and am at present sick in bed, from day to day awaiting death, which is constantly before my eyes.

I bless Maria Antonia, and I rejoice at the bodily pain that she has suffered; it is a present sent her by her heavenly Spouse.

Let her be so kind as to pray for me, and I promise to pray also for her. No more for the present. I bless you.

After the Roman edition.

LETTER 798.

To Prince della Riccia.

He invokes his protection in favor of the Congregation.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

ARIENZO, December 7, 1774.

Your Excellency: I stand in need of your kind mediation.

On Saturday next, the 10th of this month, there is to be pleaded at the royal Chamber a very important lawsuit which Baron Sarnelli has brought against our Congregation. He who thus persecutes us, maintains that we have infringed the ordinances of the king, our master,—pure imagination, in which there is not a shadow of truth.

We all beg your Excellency to be kind enough to write a few lines to the Counsellor Paoletta, the commissary of the cause, to request him to treat us as favorably as possible out of regard for your Excellency.

Be so good as to forward immediately the note to the bearer of this letter. I say *immediately*, in order that Signor Paoletta may have it soon and before Saturday.

I am with profound respect,

Your Excellency's most humble,
devoted and grateful servant,

ALFONSO MARIA,
Bishop of Sant' Agata.

After the original preserved in our convent of Bishop-Eton (diocese of Liverpool) in England.

LETTER 799.

To Sister Maria Serafina Ruggieri, a Nun in a Monastery at Naples.

He consoles her in affliction.

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

ARIENZO, December 13, 1774.

Sister Maria Angela Rosa has already informed me that the Lord has deprived you of your spiritual Father. She has also told me that you are greatly afflicted on this account, and you have confirmed this by your letter. But you should know that every good thing, that we have here below, comes from God. Now, if it is God who has sent you this good spiritual Father, and if it is this same God who has taken him from you, why should you be so afflicted?

In order to have a part in Paradise, it is necessary that we wish what God wishes; and if God has wished to take from you what he himself has given to you, why should you not be satisfied?

It is true, there is question of a spiritual guide; but as you should conform yourself to the divine will, you should become tranquil, and not grieve; for you should hope that the same Lord will not fail to send you another director, who will conduct you to heaven perhaps even better than your former one.

We must have a good intention to do good and to love God; then, everything will become easy, and will turn out well. Be, therefore, at your ease, and bless God for what he has done for that good soul; for, as he is in heaven, he will not fail to pray to the Lord to send you another guide.

For my part, I will not cease to recommend you to Jesus Christ, in order that he may deign to console you by

giving you his holy love, and all that you desire for the benefit of your soul.

In the mean time, pray to God for your deceased director, and say to him: O Lord! I wish what Thou wishest.

As for the portrait that you have had made, you may keep it in your room, in order that by reminding you of the good advice, that has so often been given you by your spiritual guide, you may make it the object of your reflections and the rule of your conduct.

According to your wish I will celebrate ten Masses, and I will pray in the holy Sacrifice for the soul of your confessor and for you.

Continue to love God; for he should be our only good. I bless you, and remain, my Reverend Mother,

Your very devoted servant,

ALFONSO MARIA,
Bishop of Sant' Agata.

After an old copy.

LETTER 800.

To Sister Brianna Carafa, in the Monastery of S. Marcellino at Naples.

He exhorts her to practise obedience.

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

ARIENZO, December 15, 1774.

First of all, I most sincerely thank you for the exquisite sweetmeats, of which you made me a present. My infirmities hinder me from eating them; but I have received them with great pleasure and have destined them for a person of distinction, to whom I am under obligations.

I have been expecting for a long time to hear from you.

I wished to know the state of your soul; for I have always great solicitude about your advancement, because I know that God loves you in a special manner, and wishes to raise you to a sublime degree of sanctity and of love.

I see with pleasure your retired life; it is to that which God calls you.

Do not expect in this retirement sweetness, sensible fervor, or full assurance of the worth of your actions.

It suffices that you learn from your director that all goes well, and that under your burden you are moving onward, though you are moving onward by force, in spite of yourself, in the midst of contradictions that are inevitable. I should regret to see you applauded and praised as a saint.

Do not be uneasy about what the Abbess may say or think: respect her, thank her, and do what your director tells you, either in regard to the door or any other thing; and let others say what they please. And as to yourself, never omit to ask God for the grace to do what he commands you, and be apprehensive lest you fail in doing what he tells you to do.

I presume that your director has positively forbidden you to speak of your past confessions, and even to think of them. As for myself, I forbid this most strictly; and if you speak of it, I shall deprive you of Communion.

Do not forget to recommend me daily to Jesus Christ, that I may obtain a good death.

You will do well to read from time to time the *Pious Reflections* that form the second part of the book on the Passion of Jesus Christ, which I have sent you. I think they are most suitable for your state.

Let us love Jesus Christ, especially now that so few love him; and let us pray every day for the good of the Church,

which is being devastated to such an extent as to excite compassion.

Believe me,

Your very humble servant,

ALFONSO MARIA,
Bishop of Sant' Agata.

After an old copy.

LETTER 801.

To Father Andrea Villani.

He asks his counsel under a pressing necessity.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

ARIENZO, December 18, 1774.

(*Confidential letter.*)

The Sarnelli lawsuit is at present exposing us to great danger. I have ordered all the Consultors, that can come, to meet here this week, and we shall reach a decision together, for I do not wish to act alone.

The case was to be argued on Saturday a week; but it has been postponed till after the holidays; this, I believe, is a favor from heaven.

It is, above all, yourself, my dear Father, whom I should wish to see here, in order to avail myself of your counsel; but I cannot make up my mind to tell you to come, for this would be spoiling a mission, which is so successful. If, then, you cannot come, we must come to a decision in the best possible way, according as God will inspire us.

At least, write to me and give me your opinion in general as best you can. The circumstances are such that they make me fear the complete ruin of the Congregation; but I

cannot confide to paper the details. Under circumstances so perilous, it will be better to lose a hand than risk the whole body; this is a certain maxim. About this I cannot say more.

Tell me what is going on around you and at what time you will return; but your return will be surely too late for the present need.

I am everywhere asking for prayers, I am having Masses said, and I know not what more to do. Memorials are being drawn up, Celano gives information to the ministers, but the danger is great and is imminent.

For this purpose have the people recite before the evening sermon a *Hail Mary* to your intention; ask the convents and whomsoever you can, for their prayers.

I bless you, my dear Father, and all your companions.

BROTHER ALFONSO MARIA.

After the original preserved in the archives of Father General at Rome.

LETTER 802.

To a Father Consultor.

He asks him to come to see him about a very important affair.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

ARIENZO, December 18, 1774.

(*Confidential letter to be read at once and entirely.*)

I send you a messenger to announce to you that Fathers Blasucci and Maione will arrive next Saturday. Please, therefore, my dear Father, to be here without fail on Tuesday or Wednesday; for these Fathers will then come from Naples, and we shall deliberate together about the Sarnelli affair, an affair of the highest importance.

Take a conveyance at my expense.

If Father Corrado is with you, let him accompany you.

But, if he is at Ciorani, send the bearer of this letter to that place; I have given him a note for Father Corrado, in case this Father should be at Ciorani.

The affair is of first importance, and the present circumstances make us justly fear that the Congregation will be entirely destroyed, if we do not yield to the storm. The reasons for this are numerous; but they cannot be intrusted to a letter.

Now, it is a certain maxim that it is better to lose an arm, than to take the probable risk of losing one's life.

At first, I regarded this danger as far off, but it now appears to me to be very probable. Hence I do not wish to come to a conclusion all alone, nor leave this world with the reproach of conscience of not having hindered our complete ruin.

Speak to Father Mazzini in these general terms; but if one does not exactly know all the circumstances, such as I know them and have set them down in writing, one cannot form a judgment about this affair. A decision must, therefore, be promptly reached without waiting for the debates of the Chamber.

That the case has been postponed till Saturday a week is, I believe, a special grace of God; the Lord has deigned to give us these few days of grace in order to deliberate.

But, we must deliberate promptly, and before the end of the Christmas holidays; for Sarnelli, seeing that the time is favorable, presses for an examination of the affairs by the Council.

I expect you, therefore, without fail on Tuesday or Wednesday.

Let us act with prudence, as God wishes that we should do; then, let us submit ourselves to the disposition of divine Providence.

If Father Corrado is not at Nocera, send him this letter to spare me the trouble of repeating the same things; in

this way he also will be informed. It will be necessary for us to accomodate ourselves to the circumstances in which we are,—and may God take care of us!

I salute Father Mazzini; I bless you and all the rest.

I would also like to see Father Caione; but he is far away, and I hesitate to make him come during this bad weather. However, if you and Father Mazzini think that he should be called, send him at once a letter by mail, to tell him from me that he should come here without fail.

I have nothing more to say at present, and I again bless you.

BROTHER ALFONSO MARIA.

After the original preserved in the archives of Father General at Rome.

LETTER 803.

To the Duke di Maddaloni.

He excuses himself for not being able to comply with his request.

ARIENZO, December 20, 1774.

Your Excellency: To-day, the 20th instant, I received the letter that you did me the honor of writing to me.

I must state that several days ago I disposed of the canonicate, made vacant in my cathedral by the death of Canon Pietro Ricoli, and the new titulary has already taken possession. May your Excellency, therefore, please excuse me for not being able to serve you.

I profit by this occasion to wish you a very merry Christmas and a happy New Year.

Believe me entirely at your command, and accept, I beg

you, the expression of profound respect, with which I have the honor to be,

Your Excellency's very humble,
devoted and grateful servant,

ALFONSO MARIA,
Bishop of Sant' Agata.

After the original preserved in the archives of Father General at Rome.

LETTER 804.

To Father Francesco Antonio de Paola.

Firmness of the saint in regard to the members of his Institute; necessity of observance.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

ARIENZO, February 4, 1775.

I should be very happy to see the foundation at Torrice established; but at least two hundred ducats of an income would be needed.[1]

As for Capuano, I will tell you under greatest secrecy what I have written to him. "If you wish to return to Naples," I told him, "you had better leave the Institute. I am ready to grant you a dispensation from your vows." More than this I cannot say either to your Reverence or to him.

You may, however, speak to him about the letter, that I have written to him; but it will be useless to ask him about anything more. My death is near; when I shall be no

[1] This foundation at Torrice was never established for want of revenues. For the same reason that at Ceprano was not made.

more, let things be arranged with my successor. For the present, I cannot say more.[1]

Father [Cipriano] Rastelli remains true to the Congregation, and he is resigned; but he must not be allowed to return to the Romagna. I have my reason for this.

The present is not the time to have recourse to the king. This is my maxim concerning the Congregation, or, if you wish, concerning the subjects: "It is God who has made the Congregation; it is God who will preserve it. But if we commit faults, we all expose ourselves to the danger of being disbanded." Often speak to all our brethren of this danger which threatens us; speak of it openly, in order that every one may carefully obey the Rules and the Superiors.

We are in God's hands, and we may see the Congregation destroyed at every moment; only prayer can save us. For this reason I tremble when I learn that faults are committed.

I bless you, my dear Father, and all your subjects.

BROTHER ALFONSO MARIA.

[*P. S.*] I cannot inform you by letter of all that occurs daily.

A word more about the Sarnelli affair. I at first feared for the final result; but the ministers are now well-disposed towards us, and we are morally certain that we shall not be destroyed. The pleading is fixed for the end of the month. Let us, therefore, continue to pray, since on this process depends the future of our Congregation.

After the original preserved in the archives of Father General at Rome.

[1] Father Luigi Capuano, who had at first so generously responded to the call of God (see Letters 213, 215, 217, 219) left the Congregation during this year.

LETTER 805.

To a Priest.

He solicits his help for a mission.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

ARIENZO, February 13, 1775.

My dear Don Nicola: As a mission is to be given at Cancello, I asked Don Pasquale Bartolino to come to preach the evening sermons; but Don Pasquale excused himself, because he has to preach Lenten sermons.

Come, then, I beg you to preach the evening sermons at Cancello. You will have to begin on Sexagesima Sunday, the 19th instant. But if you cannot come on next Sunday, it will be sufficient, if you arrive on the Sunday after. When this work is finished, you might give a little mission at Caiano. As for this last place, ask Don Crescenzo Romeo, whether he will come to preach there.

Please give me a decided answer, so that the necessary preparations may be made.

I bless you.

I send you a messenger, and I expect your answer. If, after the mission at Cancello, you could preach the evening sermon on one of the Sundays of Lent without inconveniencing Romeo, I would also be pleased.

Yours very affectionately,

ALFONSO MARIA,
Bishop of Sant' Agata.

After the original in possession of Don Carlo de Filippis at Naples, n. 11 *Forno Vecchio* Street.

LETTER 806.

To Father Francesco Antonio de Paola.

He asks him to suspend proceedings in regard to a foundation.—Various recommendations.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

[Arienzo, February, 1775.]

Although I have sent my authorization for the foundation at Torrice, yet there have come to my mind certain difficulties touching the mode of its establishment.

Please, then, my dear Father, to conclude nothing before you have told me exactly everything in reference to the income of this house, how much it amounts to, and how we shall receive it. Father Vicar or Father Caione should go to see you, in order the better to examine the affair with you, and then you should write to me.

I bless you.

Brother Alfonso Maria.

[*P. S.*] I send you a picture of our Lord on the cross, painted on canvas, for the use of the missions.[1] I also send you for the use of the Community Croiset's *Lives of the Saints*. You will also receive thirty ducats, of which I make a present to the house of S. Cecilia [Scifelli]; but I do not wish that they be spent to pay the expenses of the building; they are intended for the maintenance of the subjects. I beg you, therefore, not to think of making the least improvement in the house, unless it costs only a few *carlini*.

I expect you at Naples either during Lent or immediately after Easter, for I must communicate to you and consult with you upon certain important matters, which cannot be mentioned in a letter.

[1] In the letter of April 26, 1775, mention will be made of this painting and of its use on the missions.

I shall probably go to Nocera this Lent, for fifteen or twenty days, for a change of air, as I feel myself run down and quite exhausted. I expect you there without fail. I again bless you.

I wish you to tell every one that a letter in the name of Father Tartaglia should be changed, and that this Father be called Father Tartiglia or Tartigli. The name *Tartaglia* is not very honorable, either to him or to us, for it signifies Father *Stammerer.*

Do you know, whether Mgr. di Veroli has read my little treatise against Abate Magli, and what he has said of it? If you know anything of this, let me know it.

After the original preserved in the archives of Father General at Rome.

LETTER 807.

To Don Liborio Carfora, Rural Dean at S. Maria a Vico.

Zeal of the saint to repress scandal.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

ARIENZO, February 23, 1775.

My dear Don Liborio: The priest N. N. has asked me for a little time to go to trim the trees on his property. I allowed him ten days.[1] But I learn that he daily goes to visit a person, of whom you know. Please, then, tell him, and make him understand that, if he does not leave at once S. Maria a Vico, I will have him arrested and cast into prison. Inform me afterwards, whether he obeys or not.

Tell him that the [royal] indult regards debtors, who

[1] The saint had this priest, who dishonored his sacred character, sent into exile.

have to pay their debts; but as for him, I will enforce the ordinance of the king which is anterior to the indult.

Yours very affectionately,

ALFONSO MARIA,
Bishop of Sant' Agata.

After an old copy.

LETTER 808.

To Father Andrea Villani.

Appointment of a Superior.—Concerning the resignation of the episcopate of Sant' Agata.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

ARIENZO, March 1, 1775.

(*Confidential letter.*)

Father Blasucci writes to me, asking who is the Superior in Sicily.

I answered him that I would seek the advice of my Consultors.

Speak of this to Fathers Mazzini and Caione, and to some other Consultor, and give me their answer. For the present, Father Lauria exercises the office of Superior.

I have spoken to Mgr. Puoti; the affair, of which you know,[1] is to be taken up in a short time.

I bless you.

BROTHER ALFONSO MARIA.

[*P. S.*] Now, I may say, those concerned are beginning to see how matters stand, but there will, I think, be difficulties. Perhaps you and the rest might be of opinion, to represent to the Pope that candidates for my episcopate are not wanting, while I am indispensable to the Congregation; but the last point appears to me not to be true, for I am now good for very little, wherever I may be. It might be,

[1] The affair that interested St. Alphonsus so much, was the resignation of the episcopate.

that, whereas the Pope would not listen to my petition, he might lend an ear to your pleading, in order to favor the interests of our poor Congregation.

After the original preserved in the archives of Father General at Rome.

LETTER 809.

To the Same.

Fears of the holy bishop on account of his resignation.

[Arienzo, March 9, 1775.]

God knows in what anguish I am! The thought that I am leaving my See only to rid myself of a cross, has awakened in me the greatest stings of conscience.

I should have greatly desired that you had again spoken on the subject to Mgr. Borgia.

I am afraid that this fear of having acted through self-love, may torment me all the days of the short time that I have still to live. . .

Tannoia, Book iii. Chapter lxxiii.

LETTER 810.

To the Sovereign Pontiff Pius VI.

He solicits the favor of being allowed to substitute in place of the recitation of the divine Office, other prayers that His Holiness may designate.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

[Arienzo], March, 1775.

Most Holy Father: Alfonso Maria de Liguori, Bishop of Sant' Agata de' Goti, has the honor of representing to your Holiness, that having reached the age of nearly eighty years,—he will be eighty next September—he is from time to time subject to weakness of the head, which sometimes takes from him the free use of his faculties.

Hence, when he experiences these sufferings, he can hardly recite the divine Office. He, therefore, begs your Holiness to be kind enough to commute the recitation of the Office into other prayers. He will receive this favor with the most profound acknowledgment.

To this petition the following rescript was addressed to the confessor of the saint:

"Beloved Son in Christ: The Sacred Penitentiary grants you, the confessor of the author of the petition, the power of giving the latter, after having heard his confession, the dispensation that he desires and that you regard as necessary. You may, then, by virtue of the Apostolic authority, commute in his favor and at your pleasure, the obligation of reciting the canonical Hours into the daily recitation of other prayers at your choice, as you may judge before God to be salutary for the spiritual and corporal good of the suppliant. This power is granted only *pro foro interno.* Every impediment to the contrary notwithstanding. Given at Rome at the Sacred Penitentiary, March 31, 1775.

RATTA, *Regent of the Sacred Penitentiary.*

CANON P. LEONARDI, *Sect'y of the S. Pen'y.*"[1]

After the original preserved in the archives of Father General at Rome.

[1] "Sacra Pœnitentiaria Tibi dilecto in Christo, proprio Oratoris confessario facultatem concedit, ipsum Oratorem, si ita sit, audita prius, ejus sacramentali confessione, obligationem recitari Horas canonicas hujusmodi, in quotidianam recitationem aliarum piarum precum a Te præscribendarum, prout ipsius Oratoris animæ et corporis saluti expedire in Domino censueris, dispensando, auctoritate apostolica arbitrio Tuo commutandi. Pro foro conscientiæ tantum. Quibuscumque in contrarium facientibus non obstantibus. —Datum Romæ in Sacra Pœnitentiaria, die 31 Martii, 1775.

RATTA S. P. Reg.

P. CANONICUS LEONARDI S. P. secretarius."

LETTER 811.

To Father Andrea Villani.

Lawsuit of Baron Sarnelli.—Plan of an amicable settlement.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

ARIENZO, March 20, 1775.

(*Confidential letter.*)

My dear Father Andrea: It is now quite a time since I have received any tidings from Naples, either good or bad, concerning the lawsuit of the Baron [Sarnelli]; and I am in dread of some new storm which may deprive me of my senses. In such a danger I have been these past days; but to-day, thank God, I am much better.

Don Paolo Sarnelli has written to me. He is my lawyer, and he loves me more than he loves the baron. He has informed me that, if he can render me any service, he will do so with all his heart. He is ready, he says, to bring under consideration a plan to affect an amicable settlement.

On the other hand, I have unceasingly before my eyes the horrible prospect of the ruin of the whole Congregation, and this thought has made me tremble; for we live in times in which occasions are sought to destroy the works of God.

After mature reflection, I think it would not be improper to put forward the following project: According to what the baron says, the vineyard yields from four to five hundred ducats, and *later* it will yield more. This being supposed, I would make no difficulty in accepting an arrangement in the following terms: With our secret consent, but without any official interference on our part, the Archbishop [of Salerno] or his steward, might lease the vineyard to the baron. The latter would take the lease either for himself or for a third party, at the price of three hundred ducats a year; the lessee would bind himself to

pay one hundred ducats every four months, and so on for the future. In this way the baron would be pacified and we would become tranquil; for, altogether, the vineyard can hardly yield more than three hundred ducats. I should even be satisfied if it yielded this sum annually.

I have written nothing about this project to any one, and I do not wish to act of my own accord. Let Fathers Mazzini, Cimino, Corrado and you yourself deliberate on this matter, and, if it be necessary, order Fathers Blasucci and Maione (and also Father Caione, if you find him) to go to see you as soon as possible; for, if the case is once put on the calendar, it will be too late, and the case will be decided one way or the other.

The affair is fraught with very great danger (since there is question of the whole Congregation), and the solution of it is doubtful. It all depends on the manner in which one looks at the question; it depends on the views taken by the ministers. We have to deal with Turitto, who believes it to be a glorious thing to destroy works of this kind. But Marquis Tanucci causes me more fear than all the rest, if we regard the circumstances, with which we are acquainted. Hence, in the presence of such dangers one cannot, it seems to me, expose such an affair to the caprices of chance.

Should my project meet with your approval, I fear that it will not please Celano; for the latter, I think, ambitiously seeks after the glory of gaining this suit; but I do not know whether it is expedient to risk all, when there might be a means of calming the storm. I say, *when there might be;* for it may happen that the baron, believing himself sure of victory, will not listen to our proposition. Notwithstanding this doubt, I should think it prudent to try, now one way, now another, whether this project may be carried out.

Reflect on this, speak of it to those around you, and tell

me what the rest think. But hasten, for I would not like that, during the interval, the day for arguing the case should be fixed.

I bless you, my dear Father, and all your subjects.

BROTHER ALFONSO MARIA.

[*P. S.*] Tell the Father librarian to send me the work of Lambertini *on the Mass;* I wish to examine certain questions. I will return it to you. I also desire to examine three or four small volumes of Sacy *on the Sacred Scriptures.*

You will perhaps say to me that, as the affair has already been begun by the baron and the documents have been delivered, we can do nothing more than to plead, in order to avoid a decree of the treasury; but this is not so; for the lawsuits that are not followed up, are quashed, and nothing more is said about them. This is a fact of experience.

After the original preserved in the archives of Father General at Rome.

LETTER 812.

To Prince della Riccia.

He asks him to recommend the cause of the Institute to a person whose influence is powerful at court.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

ARIENZO, March 25, 1775.

Your Excellency: I am infinitely obliged to you for having written to Duke Turitto in our favor. Baron Sarnelli, who persecutes us, would like to gain his lawsuit by accusing us of offences, which we have not committed, and would like to ruin and annihilate all our houses, the subjects of which are continually laboring for the people.

Now, I ask your Excellency, when you see Duke Turitto, to be so kind as to solicit personally his good will in behalf of my poor companions. They labor, they do good

in the whole extent of the kingdom; and their poverty is such, that they have not sufficient bread to eat.

Except your Excellency, we have no other person who can defend us. By lending us your aid, you will also aid thousands of poor people, for whom we are laboring.

Please accept my very humble acknowledgments and the expression of profound respect, with which I have the honor to be,

Your Excellency's very humble,
devoted and grateful servant,

ALFONSO MARIA,
Bishop of Sant' Agata.

After the original preserved in the archives of Father General at Rome.

LETTER 813.

To Father Angelo Maione, at Naples.

He speaks to him about the Sarnelli lawsuit and about various persons, whose protection would be useful.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

ARIENZO, March 29, 1775.

I have read your letter. All goes well. Let us leave ourselves entirely in the Lord's hands.

You do not say a word about Picchineda; this is a sign that he is still confined to his house by illness. *Fiat voluntas tua!* [Thy will be done!]

However, I should like you to pay him a visit; you would then find out, whether he can intervene in our favor, before the cause is pleaded; otherwise his good offices will be lost for us.

If you desire a conveyance, take one at my expense.

As for the other ministers, we did all that was necessary. We must, therefore, trust in the mercy of God.

I have been suffering very much from my head these

past five days; I have had to be bled, and blisters had to be applied; and at the present time I am writing to you in bed.

I bless you, and remain always, etc.

As soon as Celano has seen the ministers, write to me, if there is still time, and tell me what are their dispositions in our regard.

After the consultation has been held,[1] I intend to write to the counsellors, who may be favorable to us, such as Fogliani, Camporeale, Marquis S. Giorgio.

But of this we shall speak later, when the cause has been pleaded, and we shall see what I should write. You or Father Blasucci must, however, absolutely take a conveyance at Naples at my expense and come to see me. As the cause is to be argued on Thursday a week, it is on Friday a week that one of you should arrive here without fail.

I say, *without fail;* for you should afford me this pleasure, since I am sick and afflicted. The arrangement is, therefore, understood that, if the case is argued on Thursday the 6th, I expect one of you without fail on Friday morning.

In case difficulties would be made in regard to our privileges,[2] or to the inconveniences that would result, if we maintained the house at Benevento, we must think of some remedy to prevent these inconveniences. Speak of this to Celano, and examine together, what might be said in regard to it.

1 "St. Alphonsus had based his hopes on the Council; but a special commissioner was appointed, of whom mention will be made later on; this was to him a bitter disappointment." (*Tannoia*, bk. iii. ch. lv.)

2 The Fathers of the Province of Benevento made use of the privileges granted to the Congregation by the Holy See. Our adversaries pretended to see in this conduct a certain proof that we had constituted ourselves a religious Order, in opposition to the royal ordinances.

I beg you to be so kind as to answer me in reference to the points that I have marked out.

Mgr. [Matteo Testa] loves our Congregation sincerely; this is certain; we should, therefore, have recourse to him, if the affairs take a bad turn. He has access to Marquis Tanucci; and, in case of disaster, he will surely do everything possible to prevent the destruction of our work.

You and Father Blasucci would, then, do well to go one of these afternoons to tell him of the danger, to which we are exposed, and to ask his counsel.

As he loves me much, I will write to him whenever you wish, and I will do so the more willingly, as we are under great obligations to him. It is he, in fact—and I know of what I speak—who formerly obtaind for us the favorable report of Cardinal Spinelli—a report which secured for us the Papal approbation.[1]

I enclose a letter for Mgr. Testa concerning our affairs. Try, then, to carry it to him one of these afternoons; read it first, then close it, and communicate to me the answer that he will give.

Let us place confidence in Jesus Christ; but God also wishes, that we should have recourse to human means, and, especially, to the servants of God.

[1] When there was question of soliciting the approbation of our Rules from the Holy See, Cardinal Spinelli had them examined (see volume i. of *Letters*, page 205) by Canon Simioli and the Abate Blaschi, to whom were joined Mgr. Giulio Torni, Bishop of Arcadiopoli, Canon Niccolò Borgia, later Bishop of Cava, and Canon Matteo Testa. All gave a favorable vote, and their report was afterwards presented to the Sacred Congregation of Bishops and Regulars. This is the reason why St. Alphonsus attributes to Mgr. Testa as great a share in obtaining the approbation of the Institute, as to Mgr. Borgia, of whom he wrote on one occasion: "We can say that God has established the Congregation through him." (See vol. ii. of *Letters*, page 94.)

I bless you, my dear Father, and I remain . . .

BROTHER ALFONSO MARIA.

After the original preserved in the archives of Father General at Rome.

LETTER 814.

To the Same.

The same subject.—Difficulties of the situation.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

[About April 2, 1775.]

Mgr. Sanseverino [1] has written to me; he tells me that he had again earnestly appealed to the baron's lawyer, "but to speak candidly," he adds, "I think you have not well reflected on the danger that your Congregation incurs; in fact, the most elementary prudence requires, that under similar circumstances you should follow the counsel of the Gospel and abandon to the adversary not only your coat, but also your cloak. Avoid the pleading in times so difficult, and sacrifice a member to save the entire body. It is for the love I bear towards your Congregation, that I speak so frankly to you."

I have received your letter. That Mgr. Testa should pay a visit to Tanucci, to find out, which views this minister holds, is surely a very good idea. You would, then, do well to arrange with Celano your line of conduct. He should explain to Mgr. Testa our means of defence. We shall have to wait till Mgr. Testa has seen Tanucci, and after the latter's ideas have once been fathomed, we should confer with Mgr. Sanseverino.

But this last interview should not take place too late, otherwise the baron will suspect that we wish to prolong the affair, and he will make new efforts, to have the cause

[1] The confessor of the king.

finished. Now, such a determination makes me tremble; for, as I have already told you, although the report of the ministers might be favorable, yet I should fear, as the definitive conclusion will depend on other Superiors, and the latter give greater cause to fear; and this it is which makes me tremble.

It will now, my dear Father, be difficult for you to see Celano, who has, no doubt, already departed. Hence, as I intend to go to Nocera on Wednesday, try your best to come to see me; I have, in fact, many things to say to you that I cannot commit to paper, and I repeat to you that, as long as we are liable to real danger, I will never deviate from an idea and a resolution, to which no prudent man, it seems to me, can find anything to object. I do not wish to risk dying with remorse for not having wished, when it was in my power, to prevent the ruin of the whole Congregation.

I do not write to Father Blasucci; but tell him from me, that I expect him without fail at Nocera during the coming days, and that I absolutely count on seeing him on Thursday.

I, indeed, foresee that, to my greatest pain, I shall have to contend with some wrong-headed member of the Congregation.

Another remark. I have made a reservation in a letter to Mgr. Sanseverino (which letter I have not yet sent), and the reservation is this: the arrangement with the baron cannot take place, if, while yielding entirely or partly to his very unjust pretensions, we are to remain exposed to the imminent risk, to which we are running at this moment.

But enough of this; come to Nocera, and we shall speak about the rest.

In the mean time, I thank you for the trouble that you have taken and that you still take for the benefit of the Congregation.

Weigh well this reflection: the simplest prudence requires, that we avoid the danger of total destruction, whatever may be otherwise the motives of hope, for these are altogether fallible, since they depend on the will of another.

I bless you and remain . . .

BROTHER ALFONSO MARIA.

[*P. S.*] As I hear, neither the king nor his confessor will be at Naples during Holy Week. Make inquiries, so as to let me know of the day of your arrival.

The confessor does not wish to see any of our Fathers at Portici, but I should like to send thither Father Vicar [Andrea Villani], who enjoys his confidence, to learn what is to be done.

Write me your opinion on this matter, and tell me, when Father Blasucci and the brother of Don Gaetano can come.

Father Blasucci wrote on March 20, that he would go to Nocera; but, it seems to me, he has not yet arrived; I desire that he should go promptly as soon as time permits.

After the original preserved in the archives of Father General at Rome.

LETTER 815.

To Father Andrea Villani and the other Fathers on the Missions in the Archdiocese of Capua.

He recommends certain ceremonies for the missions.—Manner of performing them in a useful way.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

[ARIENZO, April 26, 1775.]

(*The Superior shall have this letter read to all the Fathers, when they are assembled together.*)

I have taken much trouble, to get painted on canvas a picture of our Lord on the cross, destined to be carried in

procession on the last evening of the *Vita devota*,[1] and exposed to the view of all the faithful, as has already been done in regard to the picture representing a damned soul. But none of you has asked me for such a painting. I have, therefore, sent it, and when the mission is over, you will please return it.

May God grant, that you have at least the picture of the damned soul![2] At all events, I will send the one that I

[1] The *Vita devota* or Devout Life, is an exercise of meditation, which lasts three or four days, and which concludes every mission. "It consists, in the first place," says Tannoia, "in instructing the people during half an hour on the manner of making mental prayer, of which one should also show the necessity and the advantages. Another half hour's practical meditation is then made on the Passion of Jesus Christ. Alphonsus knew how to speak so touchingly on the sufferings of our Saviour, that the hearers shed tears, and, while before they wept for sorrow, they now wept for love. To move the people more deeply, he displayed to their gaze, during the last of these meditations, a large picture, on which was represented Jesus Christ on the cross, all mangled and covered with blood. This meditation was the most profitable of the mission. To induce the faithful to compassionate the sorrows of the Blessed Virgin, he also wished that a statue of Our Lady of Seven Dolors should be exposed to their view, and then be carried in procession."—*Tannoia*, "Life of St. Alphonsus," bk. ii. chap. lii.

[2] With respect to this ceremony, which is altogether Neapolitan, let us quote some very instructive lines of Father Tannoia. "Alphonsus," says this great historian, "would not allow the pulpit to be decorated with burning tapers, in order to show forth worldly pomp; nor would he suffer excommunications and anathemas to be fulminated, nor that stoles be thrown among the faithful, in order to rouse the feelings of the people. According to his opinion, all such means could produce only aversion for the preacher, fear and confusion among the audience, without profit or amendment. Only in the sermon on death he would exhibit to the people a skull, and while analysing all the human vanities, he wished that man should come to know his nothingness, that he should enter into himself, and be converted. In the sermon on hell he represented in the church a picture of a soul surrounded by demons. 'Since men are material,' he said, 'they will learn in this manner a little better the

have here; but if you have yours, return mine to me by the same person that will bring it to you.

Do not forget to have a procession of the Madonna on one of the evenings of the mission, in the manner in which I have performed it. You have already, no doubt, a statue of the Blessed Virgin.

This procession is held on one of the evenings after the sermon on the Blessed Virgin. The following is the order of the ceremony; communicate it to all the missionaries.

We arrange with the members of the clergy, that, at a given signal, they should accompany the statue of the Madonna. The act of contrition finished, the preacher, torch in hand, will say: *And our good Mother, where is she? Call her. Tell her that her absence afflicts us; tell her to come quickly to console us.* The main door should remain closed during the time of the sermon. Then, at the signal, given by the preacher, it should be opened; the procession should move on, followed by those that carry the Madonna under a canopy; and as soon as the preacher sees the torches appear in the church, he should exclaim: *See our good Mother; she comes to console us!*

It is a ceremony that touches the most hardened hearts, when it is performed in the manner, which I have just described.

Besides, when one is in a place where corruption prevails, such as are usually the villages of the Arable Land, where some particular vice reigns, as blasphemy, impurity or another vice, it will be useful to have recourse to the ceremony of cursing those sinners, who are addicted to these kinds of sin.

Here is what the preacher should do: After the act of contrition, he puts on a surplice and a black stole. Then, holding in one hand a torch, he shall say: "I do

punishment of sin and the hideousness of a soul at enmity with God.' "—*Tannoia*, ibid.

not curse good people nor repentant sinners; I curse only sinners that are not resolved to give up sin." He then begins to enumerate the different classes of sinners: the blasphemers, the revengeful, the fathers and the mothers who permit their daughters to associate, when they please, with those with whom they are in love, or, what is still worse, who permit the *latter* to dwell under their roof." The enumeration being finished, the preacher shall say: "All those, who are obstinate in this vice, God curses, and I myself also curse them on the part of God."

While saying the words, *I curse them*, he raises his voice to the *third tone*,[1] while with one hand he rings a bell as violently as he can.

Some of our Fathers have said, *that this function inspires too much terror.* Good God! why then do we perform it, if not precisely to inculcate fear and horror of vice?

It is, moreover, expedient to say to the people, before beginning the ceremony: "Listen: David in holy Scripture curses obstinate sinners: *Maledicti qui declinant a mandatis tuis.* [They are cursed, who decline from Thy commandments.] Hence, it is necessary, that I also should curse them." Having said this, he puts on the surplice and orders the death-knell to be tolled with the large bell.

This ceremony is of great use in large villages, the more so in the villages of the Arable Land, such as

[1] This is a very high tone, which the Italians take at the end of their sermons. to move the people to repentance. As to the ceremony, of which there is here question, we remind our readers that the touching scenes; familiar to the people in southern countries, could hardly assume the same form in every climate; but by adapting these extraordinary ceremonies to the genius of each people, we are assured of producing upon souls the most salutary impressions. We could not quote a single missionary of distinction, especially a single saint, that did not take an interest in this ingenuity of apostolic zeal.

in S. Maria di Capua and also, I think, in Marcianise.

The Fathers should abstain from saying to the clergy of the place that this ceremony is to take place on such a day. In this way these ecclesiastics will begin to declare against this project and, putting on the airs of doctors, will say: *That is not suitable; that inspires too much terror, etc.* We inspire with terror only the obstinate, or at least those who, after having heard the sermons, are not yet truly resolved to give themselves to God. Moreover, I have had this ceremony performed by our Fathers in nearly all the villages of my diocese; it has been very useful and has not caused the evil, of which some speak.

I very particularly recommend to preachers certain things that they should often repeat. These are, for example:—

1. Often to inveigh against the crime of concealing sins in confession through false shame.

2. Often in sermons to recall the obligation of avoiding as much as possible the occasions of sin.

3. To remind the people that they should recommend themselves to God, especially in temptations, and particularly in temptations of the flesh.

4. To inculcate in every sermon the love of Jesus crucified and the devotion to the Blessed Virgin. We should not, therefore, be satisfied with speaking of them only in the exercises of the *Devout Life* and in the sermons of the Madonna.

5. When a vice, such as the spirit of vengeance, impurity, theft, etc., reigns in a place, we should speak forcibly and repeatedly about this vice.

We should forbid the people to utter cries and groans while the preacher makes the act of contrition.

When we mention the motives of contrition, we should give two or three of them at the most, and in the sermons

clearly point out the difference that characterizes them. We should, besides, carefully do this in every sermon.

Every evening, after the act of contrition, we should ask a particular favor of the Blessed Virgin.

If persons have asked for some *Ave Maria's*, we should recite them before, and not after the sermon; in this way the faithful will not lose the impression of the sermon, which they have just heard, and they will return home weeping over their sins.

I beg you to communicate these notices to all our Fathers, and particularly to our young men.

I bless you, my dear Father, and all your companions.

BROTHER ALFONSO MARIA.

[*P. S.*] Please preserve this letter; it will be of use also to others in future. Have an *Ave Maria* recited every evening in view of our lawsuit. I have received from Naples no particular news on this subject.

After an old copy.

LETTER 816.

To the Lawyer Don Melchiorre Terragnoli, at Rome.

He exposes to him the reasons why he wishes to resign the episcopate, and asks his services.

[ARIENZO, April, 1775.]

My dear Don Melchiorre: I have not yet had the happiness of speaking or writing to you, but I know, what services you have rendered at Rome to my brethren of the Congregation. Hence, I am hopeful that you will show the same charity in an affair, in which my eternal salvation is at stake.

I am approaching my end. I am far advanced in age, and with that I have a multitude of infirmities, the details of which you may read in the enclosed petition. This petition contains my formal resignation of the episcopate.

His Eminence, Cardinal Castelli, having more than once shown me special affection, the thought has occurred to me of asking him to beg the Pope in a special audience to accept my resignation. Be, therefore, so kind as to take to him the enclosed letter, which contains my petition to the Sovereign Pontiff, as well as my resignation.

First, I beg you, to urge upon his Eminence, that he should very quickly obtain for me the favor which I seek.

After that, if, in order to facilitate the negotiations, I am to give you a power of attorney or use some other legal formality, of which I am ignorant, be so good as to tell me. But, in the mean time, and before I send you the required power of attorney, you will oblige me by going at once to see Cardinal Castelli, in order that the affair may at least be set in motion.

Do me, also, the pleasure of attending to the regulating of my pension, of which I really stand in need in view of my advanced age, my numerous infirmities, and the expenses that I have to incur for servants, for a carriage, and the rest. My church can, moreover, bear the burden of a pension larger than that which would be suitable for me, since it has at present an income of two thousand seven hundred ducats.[1]

I say this in order to inform you of the situation of affairs. You may then answer me on all these points, and we shall then arrange things.

Meanwhile, please acknowledge the receipt of this letter and favor me with your counsel. This will be the means of accelerating and of assuring a negotiation, the success of which depends entirely on your ability.

I conclude by offering you the expression of my profound esteem, etc.

[1] 11,475 frs.

[*P. S.*] Be kind enough to seal the letter that I have addressed to the Cardinal.

After the original copy preserved in the archives of Father General, at Rome.

LETTER 817.

To Cardinal Giuseppe Maria Castelli, in Rome.

He asks him to support his project of resignation with the Sovereign Pontiff.

[ARIENZO, April, 1775.]

Your Eminence: I have a favor to ask of you, and I firmly hope to obtain it, in view of so much kindness which you have hitherto shown to me, in spite of my unworthiness.

The favor consists in this: with the charity, that distinguishes you, be so kind as to induce our Holy Father to accept my resignation of the episcopate, which I herewith enclose.

At first sight, your Eminence will probably refuse me this favor, and will blame my project of resigning; but I ask you to be so good as to read the exposition of the motives that I address to His Holiness. Having, then, become convinced of my inability, to govern my diocese any longer, you yourself will approve of my resolution.

I confide, then, in your goodness that you will solicit an audience from His Holiness on this subject, for I could not find in Rome a more efficacious mediator than your Eminence. I, therefore, beg you once more in a suppliant manner to do me this favor as soon as possible; for I am longing every moment for the happiness of seeing myself relieved of the government of my church, especially since my last illness. This illness rendered me unfit to attend to

my duties, and awakened in me scruples that leave me no rest. (*The remainder is wanting.*)

After an old copy.

LETTER 818.

To Mgr. Guido Calcagnini, Archbishop of Tarso, and Head Chamberlain of the Pope.

The same subject.

[April, 1775.]

Monsignor: An occasion of having recourse to your great kindness has, you will see, presented itself to me very quickly.

Have the goodness to read the enclosed petition, which I have addressed to our Holy Father, the Pope. You will therein see the miserable state of health, to which I am reduced and the impossibility, under which I am laboring, of governing my diocese in a suitable manner. Your compassion will urge you to plead my cause with the Holy Father, that he may grant me the object of my request. If, in order to obtain this favor, it will be necessary for me to write to his Eminence Cardinal Rezzonico, or to send him a copy of this petition, please to inform me.

While asking for this favor, I recall to mind the kindness of which you have given me so many proofs, and I hope that you, with your usual goodness, will grant it. If you are willing to intercede for me, please to do so as soon as possible; for moments appear to me ages, as long as I am not delivered from the scruples that torment me. The burden of the episcopate does not leave me a moment's rest; especially since my last illness has made it impossible for me to exercise the duties of my office.

Tannoia, Book iii. Chapter lxxiii.

LETTER 819.

To the Sovereign Pontiff, Pius VI.

He makes known to him the state of his health and requests to be delivered from the episcopate.

[April, 1775.]

Most Holy Father: I have the honor of representing to your Holiness that, having become Bishop of S. Agata de' Goti, in the kingdom of Naples, at the advanced age of sixty-six years, I have been able with God's help to carry the burden of the episcopate for thirteen years; but I am incapable of carrying it any longer.

I have now reached a very old age, since in the month of September I shall enter my eightieth year. But age is not the only obstacle; I have, besides, a number of infirmities, that warn me of the proximity of death. I suffer from an affection of the chest, which has more than once reduced me to extremities. I suffer from palpitation of the heart, and this, also, has brought me several times to the brink of the grave. Finally, I suffer at present so great weakness of the head, that often it seems to deprive me of the use of my faculties.

This is not all. I am subject also to various extremely dangerous attacks, against which I must employ bleeding, blistering, and other remedies. In the course of my episcopate, I have received four times the holy Viaticum, and twice Extreme Unction.

To all these evils are added others that hinder me from fulfilling my pastoral duties.

My hearing is much impaired, which is a great inconvenience to those of my subordinates, who wish to speak to me confidentially, and who must raise their voices to be understood.

My paralysis has made such progress, that now I cannot

write a single line; I am scarcely able to write my signature, which can hardly be deciphered.

I am so helpless, that it is impossible for me to take a step, and in order to make the least movement, I need the help of two persons.

I pass my time either in bed or sitting in my chair.

I cannot go through ordinations, nor can I preach; and, what is worse, pastoral visitations have become impossible to me, and my diocese positively suffers thereby.

All this being the case, and my death so very near, I think it my duty to beseech your Holiness to accept my resignation, which I formally tender in this petition; because I see that in the state in which I am, I cannot fulfil the duties of my charge, nor govern my flock.

I confidently hope that your Holiness will take into consideration the miserable state to which I am reduced, and, while compassionating me, will console me by accepting my resignation. My flock will thus receive the care that I am unable to give them, and I shall be delivered from the scruples that continually torment me, when I see my unfitness to govern.

The state of my diocese is as follows:

It contains about thirty thousand souls.

The annual income amounts to two thousand six hundred ducats,[1] more or less, according to the statements made for the last four years.

The cathedral has thirty-one Canons, of whom five are dignitaries.

The territory of Arienzo possesses a collegiate church with twenty-four Canons.

Three monasteries have the enclosure: one is at Sant' Agata, another, in the city of Airola; the third, in the territory of Arienzo. There are, besides, two conservatories in which the divine Office is recited.

[1] 11,050 frs.

I await, with great confidence, the consent of your Holiness, as well as your blessing, in order that hereafter I may think only of preparing for my death, which is imminent.

After the original preserved in the archives of Father General, at Rome.

LETTER 820.

To Father Angelo Maione, at Naples.

Circumstances that might favor the happy issue of the lawsuit in which the Congregation was involved.

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

ARIENZO, May 8, 1775.

I wrote you last evening; but I wish to say a few words more.

Signor Celano, it seems to me, wishes at the first sitting of the tribunal to say something of the good that the Congregation has hitherto done in the kingdom. I think that he will do so; and it would be well, dear Father, if you also adroitly suggested this to him.

He may say that the people evangelized by us, commonly affirm that they never had such missions. You may tell him what Father Vicar reported to me concerning the inhabitants of Tarantinum, where both nobles and people said on this point: "Of all the missions that have been given to us, none has been more successful or produced better results."

Afterwards our Fathers gave a mission at Foggia. They are at present occupied in giving a mission at Capua, and on Wednesday they will begin another in the city.

Write to me, although nothing important could yet have occurred. Tell me the result of the interview with Vivenzio — I mean the lawyer. Through Don Niccola [Vivenzio] you may easily reach his brother, the physician

to the king's children and also, as I am told, to the queen. I hear that the latter (but this is only the talk of the village) will now enter the Little Council at Portici.[1]

You may also consider, at what time it will be necessary to make a present to Vivenzio; let me know and tell me the amount; but do not go too high. However, it seems to me that it is not yet time to speak of presents. We must wait till the council has taken place.

I am very sorry to learn that Salomon is still ailing.

As for Vargas, it is said, that he easily favors the opinion of the one that speaks to him last; you will, then, do well not to call upon him before the last days.

I am soliciting prayers wherever I can, and on these prayers I rest all my hopes. Fully resigned to God's will, I trust in Jesus Christ and in our good Mother Mary, and I beg them to grant me the necessary strength.

Father Vicar wished to send in his place Father Blasucci; tell me when the latter arrives. It is always good for two of you to plan together.

Tell Celano that every one congratulates us that we have so able a lawyer as he is, and we do not cease to thank God for this.

I bless you, my dear Father, and those that are with you.

Brother Alfonso Maria.

After the original preserved in the archives of Father General, at Rome.

1 By a clause in her marriage contract, Queen Maria Carolina, Archduchess of Austria, had the right to take part in the Council of State as soon as she became the mother of the hereditary prince. This happened on January 4, 1775, when she gave birth to Carlo Francesco, Duke of Puglia. As the Council of State was then held at Portici, it was called the Little Council.

LETTER 821.

To Father Andrea Villani, at the Mission at Capua.

Fears of the Saint in regard to the future of his diocese.

[ARIENZO,] May 13, 1775.

. . . . . May God's will be always done!

You are now giving a mission, when I should so much like to see you here! In order to guard against scruples, I should, in fact, consult you on many points, as I am to leave my diocese! I leave it without pain, because I leave it through obedience.

The aspirants, who wish to succeed me in the episcopate, are very numerous, and I fear that I shall be replaced by some grandee; in which case I must need look upon all the labor hitherto bestowed, as lost.

I pray to Jesus Christ to have pity on my diocese. As for you, my dear Father, and all those that are with you, never more speak to me of my diocese; you would thereby cause me to live in continual agony.

Tannoia, Book iii. Chapter lxxv.

LETTER 822.

To the Same.

Reasons why the Saint should no longer remain in his diocese.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

ARIENZO, May 14, 1775.

I have received your answer.

You would advise me, you say, to defer my departure for Nocera till the time when the opinion of the council has become known.[1]

[1] There is here question of the Sarnelli lawsuit.

But, if my affairs are promptly arranged and my successor has been appointed, I should have to depart without waiting for the issue of the consultation; for my successor will wish by all means to be consecrated before the great heat sets in. Answer me immediately, and by way of Naples, unless you know a shorter way.

Besides, after my resignation has been made public, I do not understand the utility of staying here till the end of the consultation. The decision of the tribunal need not be expected before three or four months.

Tell me, then, that I am doing the will of God by leaving my diocese; I should thus leave it in all tranquillity.

Give my regards to the archbishop,[1] and beg him to recommend us to God in the vexations through which we are passing.

I do not know why you press so much the return of Father Cimino. He is useless, you always tell me, and Father Maione is sufficient.

Let him remain till after the first pleading; we shall then see the turn that affairs will take and what metal the ministers are made of. No doubt, Father Cimino is not necessary; but many things may happen these days, and as Father Maione cannot be everywhere, Father Cimino may be of use in going to find one or the other person; he may be of use in giving some advice; he may be of service in encouraging Celano and in suggesting an idea that would not occur to the mind of another. Why then say that he is useless, at a time in which interests of the highest importance are at stake.

I bless you and all your subjects,

BROTHER ALFONSO MARIA.

[*P. S.*] The messenger of Santangelo will carry my

[1] The Archbishop of Capua was at that time Mgr. Michele Maria Galeota, a Theatine

letter to you without passing through Naples; answer me, then, immediately, as the messenger is to return here to Arienzo.

After the original preserved in the archives of Father General, at Rome.

LETTER 823.

To Father Maione, at Naples.

Counsels relative to the Sarnelli process.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

[Arienzo, May 21, 1775.]

The case will, then, be put off till to-morrow, Monday, the 22nd.

This delay, however, does not displease me, since it will allow Vivenzio to prepare what he wishes to say; and this lawyer, I see, can render us great services, the more so, since he is on good terms with Tanucci.

However, since the adjournment comes from us, we should do well, it seems to me, after a certain time, say in ten or twelve days, to set the matter again in motion, for now we have a well founded hope of seeing the ministers declaring themselves in our favor. Later on, the ministers may change, and we do not know what may happen.

Picchineda, you write me, does not wish to depart from his plan. I do not know what this plan is. Perhaps he wished that we should wait for the decision of the council, and, according to his view of things, he would not have taken any step.

But as for me, I should wish him to see Turitto[1] before the case is called up; for we might then learn the difficulties that make most impression upon Turitto.

Yet I am far from Naples, and it may be that I am speaking altogether at random; you, who have the affairs

[1] Duke Turitto or Toritto was the fiscal lawyer of the Royal Chamber.

before your eyes, can, with the counsel of wise men, better judge what part to take.

I must inform you, my dear Father, that just this morning I received a letter from Cardinal Giraud, Pro-auditor of the Pope. He tells me positively that the Pope has accepted my resignation.

Do not yet publish this news; but do not deny it to any one that knows of it.

Two messengers have passed, and I have received no news from Signor [Melchiorre] Terragnoli; I am constantly waiting for him to write me in what form I should send in my resignation; and, in the mean time, I remain embarrassed. Have the Brother watch the mail, in order that the letter from Rome may not be intercepted, as I have my fears in this respect.

Having said all this, I give you my blessing, and I remain . . .

BROTHER ALFONSO MARIA.

[*P. S.*] This very moment I received a curious letter from Father Cimino. He wishes that I should again write to Prince della Riccia to ask him to tell Duke di Turitto that in the matter of Rules and privileges we cannot be reproached of having committed even a venial sin!

How is that? You told me a short time ago that La Riccia had written a second time to Turitto, and now you wish that I should again write. Do you, then, wish that the Prince della Riccia should flee from Naples, in order no longer to be molested by us, or that he should no more answer when I write to him? This is enough; it is useless to importune the Prince any longer.

If Turitto has any regard for him, the two notes that he received will be sufficient.

From Capua Father Vicar writes to me that the case is adjourned. Niccola Vivenzio, he says, wishes to inform the ministers, and perhaps plead the case himself with the

aid of Celano. I learn, moreover, that this Niccola Vivenzio is a young man of very great merit, but let us take care not to alienate Celano. However, as long as the latter is there to give his counsel, and does not complain, let us leave things to God's keeping.

But once more, I beg you to speak earnestly to Picchineda, to mention to Turitto the affair of the privileges. Where is the harm done, since we had the *Exequatur*, and only one Father once availed himself of these privileges? But we should be afraid, since, if an affair of this kind is presented all distorted, Turitto may injure us with Tanucci.

I hear that Turitto is at Portici. If Picchineda thought of going to visit him, we would pay his travelling expenses.

However, since this matter of privileges gives so much umbrage to Turitto, it will be necessary for Celano and Vivenzio, to prepare well their arguments on this point.

After the original preserved in the archives of Father General, at Rome.

LETTER 824.

To the Same.

The same subject.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

ARIENZO, June 4, 1775.

I hear that it is the Commissioner and not Marquis Spiriti who is to make the report to the Royal Chamber. I am very glad of this. Please let me know whether this is true. I send you my signature in case it may be of service to you.

It would be useless for Father Vicar to go to Naples at present. He will go when the council is held, and for the special purpose of seeing Mgr. Testa. He writes

me, however, that he intends to spend a few days at Naples.

All the information that you have given me, is good. Let us, then, leave everything to the mercy of God.

Please try to obtain information in regard to the rumor that is abroad concerning the sudden death of the Bishop of Girgenti. It is his agent, I am told, who has spread the news.

This is all that I have to say. I bless you, and remain . . . .

BROTHER ALFONSO MARIA.

[*P. S.*] I expect you, without fail, immediately after the decision of the council has been given, to give me, at least, your opinion in regard to the letters to the counsellors of State. In the mean time, I am continuing to say Mass for the happy issue of the lawsuit.

I would advise you promptly to expedite the writing, because if we do not chance to have the ministers fix the date of the pleading, we shall not have enough time to give them information, or there will remain to us so little time that our information, instead of being given with a tranquil mind, will be given in a hurried manner.

After the original preserved in the archives of Father General, at Rome.

LETTER 825.

To Mgr. Niccola Borgia, Bishop of Aversa.

He recommends to him a young man of Sant' Agata.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

[ARIENZO, June 10, 1775.]

Monsignor: The bearer of this letter to your Lordship is Signor Niccola de Robertis, *primicerius* of my cathedral. He would like, for just reasons, to have his nephew enter

the seminary of Aversa. This young man belongs to one of the most respectable families of Sant' Agata, and, as this family is large, I would ask you, on my account, to be as easy as possible in regard to the price of board.

I know not as yet what to do in reference to my resignation, for I am ignorant whether the Pope wishes me to leave my diocese, or whether I am to continue to govern it. Have the goodness to recommend me to Jesus Christ, that I may do his will, and accept the expression of profound respect, with which I have the honor to be

Your Lordship's most devoted and grateful servant,

ALFONSO MARIA,
Bishop of Sant' Agata.

[*P. S.*] My health is bad; I am altogether helpless and my death is near, for I now have violent pains in the head which attack me suddenly and oblige me to bathe the head at every moment.

I should like to know whether your Lordship has been willing to give the letter of recommendation.

After the original preserved by the Redemptoristines of Saint-Amaud-les-Eaux (France).

LETTER 826.

To Mgr. Onofrio Rossi,[1] Bishop-elect of Sant' Agata de' Goti.

He invites him to an interview.

June 17, 1775.

Monsignor: When you have taken possession of your See, be so kind as to come to spend two days in our house

[1] Mgr. Onofrio Rossi was born at Aversa on August 20, 1717. He was appointed bishop, first, of Fondi, in 1757, then of Ischia in 1764, and, finally, of Sant' Agata in 1775. But in this last instance the royal *Exequatur* was refused him, and he could not take possession of this See till four years after his preconization.

at Nocera. I will give you all desirable explanation and secret information about the affairs of the bishopric, and you will thus know what has been the object of my efforts during the space of thirteen years. Two days will suffice for me to tell you all, and my information, coming thus to the aid of your well-known ability, you will, I hope, govern this diocese in a perfect manner for the glory of God. . . .

Tannoia, Book iii. Chapter lxxvi.

LETTER 827.

To Mother Maria Raffaella, Superior of the Redemptoristines at Sant' Agata.

He gives the Community salutary advice.

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

Arienzo, June 27, 1775.

The mail has arrived three times, and I have received no letters from Rome. I await the manifestation of the will of God, in order to obey him according to what he may please to dispose in regard to the few days that remain to me; I know that but few days will remain, for yesterday I was very ill.

Neither the agent nor my successor has written to me; this is a sign that at Rome the affairs have become very much entangled.

Pray to God for the Pope, as I continually pray for him. Yes, pray for the Pope, who, according to a letter written to me from the Romagna, is so much afflicted as to desire death on account of several events that are contrary to the

welfare of the Church—events, about which I omit to write, as it would take too long to speak of them.

I pray to God to grant you health for the good of the monastery; I hope that the Lord will not call you to himself before the Community is strengthened sufficiently to govern itself.

Do not cease to recommend that all abuses and novelties should be guarded against; for novelties can imperceptibly ruin regular observance. The observance of the Rule in many monasteries, once very regular, has fallen into decay, because of the gradual introduction of abuses. Anything new, anything not conformable to the old customs, we should fear, especially when it is evident that it leads to laxity.

I bless you and all your daughters, every one in particular, that Jesus Christ may fill you with his love.

Wherever the love of God reigns there is nothing to fear; therefore, constantly remind your religious that they should perform all their actions in order to please God; and when they are not working, they should occupy themselves at least with repeating acts of love to Jesus Christ. Let them often say: O my Jesus! give me Thy love; O my Jesus! give me Thy love. And let them say to the Blessed Virgin: O my Mother! make me love Jesus Christ; O my Mother! make me love Jesus Christ.

Do not omit to pray for the affair that I have recommended.[1] We have heard that our enemies are preparing to strike a heavy blow in order to crush us; but God is with us.

Against this new bishop the enemies have said many

[1] The Sarnelli lawsuit.

things; but I do not believe them, and I hope that, if God wishes, he will be able to govern more leniently than the other bishops of Sant' Agata, and I am well prepared for what I am to say to him.

Believe me, Reverend Mother,

Your very devoted servant,

ALFONSO MARIA,
Bishop of Sant' Agata.

After an old copy.

LETTER 828.

To his Brother Don Ercole de Liguori, at Naples.

He announces to him that his resignation has been accepted and asks him to attend to two important matters.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

ARIENZO, June 29, 1775.

My dear Don Ercole: I do not in the least doubt the affection that you have towards me, and if I have written to you as I have, it was to spare me all scruple. Don Giovanni Miniera has informed me that he himself would attend to the pension of the College [of Doctors].

As for my resignation, it has been accepted, and provision for my diocese has been made in favor of Mgr. Rossi, Bishop of Ischia.

The Pope has assigned to me a large pension of eight hundred ducats. I hope that at Naples no difficulties will be made; but, if difficulties are made, the pension of the College will be sufficient for me.

I would now ask you to do me a service, that of settling the terms in which you wish to give up to my Fathers a

part of your palace.[1] For, if God called you to himself without giving you time to regulate this matter, my Fathers would have absolutely nothing. The affair of the chaplaincy [of Abate Ciceri] also should be regulated. Since you wish to oblige us in this, I will write you later from Nocera, how you have to manage this business.

These are the two points that I wish to have cleared up, so as not to think any more of them; for I should wish to think no longer of the things of this world, but only of preparing myself for death which is so near. Quiet me then, I beg you, on these two points. In a few days, when I shall have reached Nocera, I will write you at length on this point.

I had told the Pope that, if before God he believed me yet capable of governing my Church, notwithstanding my great age and my numerous infirmities, I would consent to do so, and that, in order to do not my will, but God's. I am, therefore, certain now that, after having accepted the episcopate by the will of God, I am also obeying this divine will by laying down this burden.

In conclusion, I embrace you affectionately. At Nocera, then, we shall see each other sometimes during the year.

BROTHER ALFONSO MARIA.

After the original in possession of the Redemptorist Fathers, at Roulers, Belgium.

[1] The Fathers of the Congregation, when they went to Naples, were lodged in the Liguori palace. Don Ercole assigned to them definitively one floor destined for this purpose.

LETTER 829.

To the Canonesses Regular of St. Augustine, at Arienzo.

He bids them farewell and recommends himself to their prayers.

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

ARIENZO, June 29, 1775.

I am on the point of departing, and I leave you this picture of my Mother, under whose protection I place you all, and I beg you to recommend to her my death, which cannot be far off.

I beg you, have the Community say every Saturday a *Salve Regina*, to obtain for me a good death; and when you hear that I have passed to another life, I beg you to recite for me during three days the Litany of the Blessed Virgin, and to offer up for me a holy Communion.

At present, I have not the power to bless you, since I am no longer your Superior. I send, therefore, my regards to you and to all the religious, thanking you for all the kindness that you have shown me, and I pray Jesus Christ to reward you for all you have done.

Please accept the homage of the profound respect with which I remain

Your very humble servant,

ALFONSO MARIA DE LIGUORI,
of the Most Holy Redeemer.

After a copy.

LETTER 830.

To the Nuns, at Frasso.

He leaves them his last recommendations.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

ARIENZO, June 30, 1775.

My very dear Daughters in Jesus Christ: I intend soon to depart; but I do not know when I shall be able to do so, having not yet received the note from the Nuncio.

Though far away from you, yet I shall always recommend to God my Daughters, and I hope to see you again in Paradise, after you have sanctified yourselves here below.

In the mean time, study to love our Lord more and more, and, in your visits to the Blessed Sacrament, never forget to ask of God for me the favor of a good death, for I am quite near my end.

I bless you in the Sacred Heart of Jesus, and I remain

Your very devoted servant,

ALFONSO MARIA, *Bishop.*

After the original in possession of Father Raffaele Buonanno, of the Oratory, at Naples.

General Correspondence.

III.

AFTER THE EPISCOPATE.

(1775 — 1787.)

LETTER 831.

To Mother Isabella Maria Affaitati, in the Monastery of S. Leonardo, at Monopoli.

He excuses himself for not being able to render a service, except under certain conditions.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

NOCERA, September 14, 1775.

Reverend Mother: I have received your letter, and I have had it read to me, for I can hardly read, and it has been impossible for me to write.

I have retired to this place, Nocera, quite weighed down by infirmities, which announce to me a speedy death, and which determined the Pope to accept my resignation. I am, in fact, like a corpse.

Father Pavone is far from you, but I am still farther away. The director should, without doubt, be near the persons whom he directs; but our Fathers are missionaries, and they cannot occupy themselves with the direction of penitents.

If ever Father Pavone should come into your neighborhood, I will tell him to call upon you.

I must, however, inform you that to send the Fathers hither and thither, is a matter with which I will not concern myself. You may write to Father Villani; it is he who regulates these things. All that I can do is to give you, as

occasion requires, advice on matters of importance; the answer, however, will consist only of a few lines, for I am good for nothing, being so overwhelmed with infirmities.

Please, then, recommend me to Jesus Christ, since my death is near. I will recommend you to God that he may make you a saint by taking full possession of your heart.

I have the honor to be, Reverend Mother,

Your very humble servant,

ALFONSO MARIA DE LIGUORI, *Bishop.*

After a copy.

LETTER 832.

To the Fathers and Brothers of the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer.

General admonitions.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

NOCERA, November 4, 1775.

My Dear Brethren: Be yet more fervent in your prayers because our opponents are making greater efforts to crush us.[1]

[1] "Let us recall in a few words the cause of this animosity. Baron Sarnelli laid claim to a vineyard, which his brother Andrea had formerly made over to St. Alphonsus under certain conditions. He pretended that there had been an evasion of the law which forbade religious Communities to make any purchases of property. Encouraged in his proceedings by Maffei, who, on his part, persecuted the Fathers at Iliceto, he went so far, before the tribunals, as to endanger even the existence of the Congregation. As the affair lingered on and calumnious petitions were multiplying at the royal court, Marquis Tanucci, to clear up the matter, published on October 3, 1773, three ordinances: the first was addressed to Ferdinando di Leon, fiscal attorney of the Junta of Abuses; the second, to the commissioner of the tribunal of the country, Don Biagio Sanseverino; the third, to Duke Turitto, fiscal attorney of the Royal Chamber. All these contained the following injunction, namely, that after a

I give here certain general admonitions.

The end of meditation is to consider the eternal truths, and to pray to God for his help.

When people in the world give themselves to meditation, they should spend more time in the consideration of the eternal truths than in making petitions; but you, who are already deeply convinced of these supernatural truths, must devote yourselves more to prayer than to meditation.

Jesus Christ says: *Si quid petieritis Patrem in nomine meo, dabit vobis* ["If you ask the Father anything in my name, he will give it to you."—*John*, xvi. 23]; and in another place, *Si quid petieritis me in nomine meo, hoc faciam* ["If you shall ask me anything in my name, that I will do."—*Ibid.* xiv. 14.] Therefore, ask for graces of God always in the name of Jesus Christ, and of Jesus Christ in his own name.

Especially, always ask for the love of God, and for the grace to belong entirely to him; and repeat again and again: "O my God, in the name of Jesus Christ, make me belong entirely to him." And when you pray to the Blessed Virgin, always add the petition: "Make me belong wholly to Jesus Christ."

Now, that the missions are beginning, do not forget to preach this always in the sermons, in the instructions, in the other exercises, and before the rosary, and to recommend always—I mean, many times every day—the love of Jesus Christ, and especially the love of Jesus in his Passion; and impress it deeply on the minds of the people that in every temptation they should pray fervently to Jesus and Mary.

What I have said thus far, is for the people. Now

compilation of all the proceedings and accusations against us in the Council of S. Chiara, in that of the Sommaria, and in the royal council, the attorney, Ferdinando di Leon, and two other deputies, were to make their opinions known to his Majesty, the king, and to transmit all the documents to the Secretariate of the State." (*Tannoia*, bk. iv. ch. v.)

a word to the missionaries. Those of you who are going on the missions, should be very careful to offer to God, not merely those labors that please you—as, for instance, the sermons, the spiritual exercises, etc.—but also those that you do not like, and for which you have no natural attraction,—as the Christian doctrine, the recitation of the rosary in public, hearing the confessions of men, of the sick, and of old people, etc. Here is the merit.

Hence, I recommend to all strict obedience; and I oblige all the Superiors of the missions, to inform me of all those subjects that are notably disobedient to the Superior of the mission, who, it is my will, shall be obeyed as readily as myself, were I present.

What I order for the missions, I order also for all the exercises that are performed in the houses, whether for the Community or for strangers.

If, my Brethren, we conduct ourselves well, God will maintain us; if we do not, he will certainly destroy us.

And, therefore, I am not sorry when a subject is sick, or even when he leaves the Congregation; for to him I say, "Good-bye to you!" but I am deeply grieved when my brethren fall into faults, especially against obedience or poverty.

I now bless you all, one by one. Pray and have prayers said that God may protect us in the persecution, through which we are passing, and which is, at this moment, fiercer than ever; but I have confidence in Jesus Christ, and in our Mother Mary, that they will not abandon us.

Let each one daily pray for my intention, for my death is very near. As for me, I do nothing but pray continually for you, whom I hold far dearer than all my relatives. May you be blessed, and blessed be all your labors, both on the missions and in the houses!

BROTHER ALFONSO MARIA.

After the original preserved in the archives of Father General, at Rome.

LETTER 833.

To Father Angelo Maione, at Naples.

Difficulties relative to the Saint's pension.—Personal advice to Father Maione.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

NOCERA, November 20, 1775.

(Read what is on the next page; there you will find something important, on account of which I send you again the messenger.)

I hear of the difficulties made by Vivenzio about the *Exequatur* of my pension; *it is the bishop that should pay it*, he says; but now there is no bishop.

In the act of translation, the Pope ordains that the pension should be paid by the Vicar-General of the bishop or by the chief Canon of Sant' Agata. Now, as at present there is no bishop, and as there will probably be none for several years, there will also be no Vicar-General of the bishop. The first Canon should, therefore, pay the pension, since it is taken only out of the episcopal revenues.

It will be necessary to draw the attention of the lawyers to this point, for they may always say: *When there is no bishop, who is there to pay the pension?* But the act of translation declares that it is the first Canon that should pay it. For this purpose there is no need of an ordinance of the Vicar-General, since there is neither bishop nor Vicar-General, and in the mean time, the poor former bishop, an octogenarian, a sick man and a cripple as he is, must live and have some one at his service.

Here I must finish. I give you my blessing.

BROTHER ALFONSO MARIA.

[*P. S.*] When the time comes, please let me know whether I should make some pecuniary present to Picchineda; I will send it to you.

In future, my dear Father, when I write you in absolute terms, have the goodness to execute my orders to the letter without taking counsel of any one.

In all the affairs that concern myself, I submit to another, and I do not cease to ask counsel; but in regard to certain things, which I regard as absolutely good, I do not ask any one's counsel.

I say this to you, because I have seen with pain that so far you have given to Vivenzio neither my letter, nor my note, although I had formally prescribed to you to forward both to him.

I do not mean that Vivenzio should ask an audience with Tanucci before the issue of the lawsuit before the Chamber, in case the Chamber would not be forbidden to us. This leave to the opinion of the lawyers. I, however, desire that Vivenzio should promptly call upon Tanucci and speak to him in strong terms; for this minister has been, so far, visited only by our enemies. It would, nevertheless, be better, I think, to take this step only after the Chamber has rendered a favorable decree.

In the mean time, remit as soon as possible my letter and my note to Vivenzio. I do not think that Celano could feel offended; yet, if you believe that he might take umbrage at this, try to arrange the affair as will seem to you best. But, by all means, remit at once to Vivenzio my letter and my note.

It is not necessary to tell you the motives that I have in pressing this matter. You should simply obey. This does not concern the management of the lawsuit, for, in regard to the management, I depend on the prudence of wise men.

The Chamber, I hope, will not be inhibited to-day; this, however, seems to me to be difficult. Would to God that the affair of the three commissioners [1] may turn out as

[1] The three deputies, of whom mention is made in the preceding letter.

Celano has thought it will; yet there are difficulties in the way.

I conclude by blessing you again.

I thank you for the zeal that you have shown in an affair that gives you so much trouble. I pray to Jesus Christ and the Madonna to reward you.

You have mentioned to me the convent S. Margaritella. There are two S. Margaritelle, and I am on good terms with both convents; one is situated beyond *S. Potito*, the other beyond *la Stella*. Obtain information and tell me what to write; at present, I should not be able to do so.

After the original preserved in the convent at Saint-Trond, Belgium.

LETTER 834.

To Ferdinand IV., King of Naples.

He asks him to order the payment of the pension that has been assigned to him.

[NOCERA, end of November, 1775.]

Sire: Prostrate at the foot of your royal throne, Bishop Don Alfonso de Liguori humbly represents to your Majesty that his great age and infirmities have forced him to resign the episcopal church of Sant' Agata de' Goti, governed by him for the space of about thirteen years. He has now withdrawn to private life to occupy himself only with his salvation. But he has not been able, hitherto, to touch the pension which has been assigned to him from the revenues of said Church, and by which he was to provide decently for his subsistence.

He, therefore, addresses himself to your Majesty and humbly begs you to give to the économe of this episcopal revenue, *saltem per modum provisionis* [at least provisionally] the order to furnish the author of this petition with a certain sum, fixed according to your good pleasure. This

sum should be drawn from the revenues accruing since the month of June last, the time of the resignation of the episcopate, and from the revenues that are to accrue subsequently. The author of the present petition could thus provide decently for his subsistence, and he will pray to God to reward you for this signal favor.

The answer to this petition was as follows:

NAPLES, December 9, 1775. — The Royal Chamber of S. Chiara says, ordains, and commands that the économe of the episcopal revenues of Sant' Agata de' Goti should pay to the Reverend Don Alfonso de Liguori nine hundred ducats annually, to be taken from the income of said revenues, until it has otherwise been decided by the Royal Chamber of S. Chiara.

VARGAS.—MACCIUCCA.—PAOLETTI.—PATRIZIO.

Examined by the royal Treasurer.—The most noble, the MARQUIS CITO, *President of the Council and Prefect of the Court.*—SALOMON, etc.[1]

After the original preserved in the archives of Father General, at Rome.

[1] Die 9 mensis decembris 1775 NEAPOLI.—Regalis Camera sanctæ Claræ providet, decernit, atque mandat quod œconomus Mensæ episcopalis S. Agathæ Gothorum solvat in beneficium Reverendi D. Alphonsi de Liguoro ducatos nongentos annuos ex fructibus prædictæ Mensæ, donec aliter fuerit provisum per Regalem Cameram sanctæ Claræ.

VARGAS.—MACCIUCCA.—PAOLETTI.—PATRIZIUS.

Vidit Fisculus Regalis.—Illmus MARCHIO CITUS, P. S. et spectab. Aulæ Præf.—SALOMONIUS, etc.

LETTER 835.

To Don Michele N.

Letter of thanks and of good advice.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

NOCERA, December 22, 1775.

I thank you, my dear Don Michele, for your generous present of crawfish.

I will pray to God for you; I will ask him to make you a saint, to bless your family, and, also, to establish peace and concord among the women of your house.

I, at the same time, wish you a very merry Christmas. May you receive in the service of the Infant Jesus every spiritual and temporal happiness that you may desire, if it be for the good of your soul!

Please accept the expression of profound respect with which I have the honor to be,

Your very devoted and grateful servant,

ALFONSO MARIA DE LIGUORI, *Bishop.*

After an old copy.

LETTER 836.

To Father Angelo Maione, at Naples.

He asks his advice.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

NOCERA, January 20, 1776.

I wish to ask your advice.

During this vacancy of the See [of Sant' Agata], Canon de Roberto is charged with the duty of paying my pension. I should not, therefore, like to make him unfriendly. On the other hand, it is not an agreeable thing to have to deal with him, for he is slow in making payment; and, as there is question of a *pension*, all that

is not paid before I die, will, so I am told, revert to the treasury of the Chamber.

For the present, I have little to expect from what was due in December; but on the feast of the Annunciation a half-yearly payment matures, and another in the month of October. The largest amount may be collected in October; for the grain of the three farms will be then harvested. I should wish to have nothing to do with Roberto in October, as I might repent of having done so. I should, however, even before this time, wish to declare a sequestration of all the ripe grain; I could thus claim the two maturities at the same time, namely, that on the feast of the Annunciation and that in October. The fact is, after October the revenues of the bishopric are insignificant.

But, first of all, by which court should we have this sequestration declared? By the tribunal of the Nunciature or by the Royal Court? The latter has fixed the amount of my pension at nine hundred ducats, but I do not wish to accept this whole sum; I should feel a scruple.[1]

In order that Roberto may not be able to dispose of what falls due on these two semi-annual dates, I think that it will suffice to have the sequestration ordered by the Nunciature.

We must, besides, wait for the opportune moment, for I know that until October very little money is received at Sant' Agata.

Let us now come to the advice for which I am asking.

On the half-yearly income, which fell due in December, Roberto still owes me two hundred ducats, or a little less; for, he did not collect the monthly revenues from Carmignano, as he thought he would. On the other hand, he made me hope that he would in a short time sell the wine and the oil, and I counted on soon receiving the round sum of

[1] The sum allowed the saint by the royal decree (3825 frs.) exceeded that which had been fixed by the Pontifical rescript; hence the scruple of which he speaks.

one hundred and twenty, or, one hundred and thirty ducats. Several weeks, however, have elapsed, and nothing has come of all this. Moreover, there is an arrearage due to me by Roberto on account of the transaction.

According to the opinion of Father Vicar and Father Cimino, I should through the archdeacon induce Don Nicola [Roberto] to pay me; in fact, I anxiously desire to pay a debt which will soon be asked of me. But, on the other hand, the sale of the oil and wine seems to be, at present, sure, and Roberto will be dissatisfied, if I have recourse to the archdeacon to press him.

Give me, then, your advice, my dear Father, and tell me whether or not I should write to the archdeacon.

Give me, also, your opinion as to the tribunal to be chosen to sequestrate the grain in October; as for myself, I should prefer availing myself of the Nunciature.

The king has returned to Naples; go, then, again to see Marquis de Marco, and ask him to present our petition. I bless you.

Let me know, whether Monsignor di Matera [1] has returned from Rome.

BROTHER ALFONSO MARIA.

After the original preserved in the archives of Father General at Rome.

[1] Canon Giuseppe Sparano had been appointed Archbishop of Acerenza and Matera on May 29, 1775.

LETTER 837.

To the Same.

Anxiety of the saint about the issue of the Sarnelli lawsuit.—He trusts only in God.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

NOCERA, January 23, 1776.

We received pleasant news this morning: I use the word *pleasant*, in order that we may be aided in accepting with resignation the will of God.[1]

If this news is confirmed, there remains no other hope than God; but he is more powerful than Tanucci and the whole world.

I send you a messenger; tell me, then, whether you have heard any other definite news.

I have written to Benevento, and I am sending my letter by a messenger. I wish to know whether Cardinal Banditi has succeeded in his application to the queen.

[1] The following passage from Father Tannoia will indicate the nature of this news:

"Alphonsus," he says, "neglected no means of defence; but our adversaries also sought in every possible way to accomplish their purpose, and, laying the axe to the root of the tree, they zealously devoted themselves to disparage the doctrine followed by St. Alphonsus and his children. 'They are Jesuits resuscitated,' they said, 'if they are not entirely annihilated, it will all be over with faith and morals.' Everything about us, according to them, breathed laxity, error, and malice; all was opposed to the Gospel, all was prejudicial to the Church and the State. . . . . Marquis Tanucci was singularly moved by the accusations made against the doctrine of St. Alphonsus, and, in order to throw light on complaints so strongly urged and so often repeated, he decided that our cause should be discussed no longer in the Royal Chamber before which it had been introduced, but in the *Royal Junta of Abuses*. This determination was for our adversaries a new triumph, for us a new subject of discouragement."—*Tannoia*, "Life of St. Alphonsus," bk. iv. ch. viii.

The enclosed letter is intended for the confessor of the queen.[1] Write the address upon it, so that you may be able to use it, if you think fit.

Father Cimino will go in search of the Princess of Ottaiano; but I do not know, whether at present she is at Naples or at Ottaiano. In case you find this out, inform Father Cimino of it.

If the news is confirmed, I intend to ask Mgr. Bergamo [2] to come to our aid in this extremity.

Send from me twelve *carlini* to the Capuchin nuns, that they may make another novena to the Blessed Virgin and recite every day the litany.

See whether in this desperate case Vivenzio through his brother [3] could not interest the queen in our favor.

I hear that Leon [4] has had a discussion with Celano concerning the doctrines that we hold; but I am astonished at Celano for not stating that I, in fact, held in my youth one or the other *benign opinion*, but that many years ago I retracted my first opinion, and declared myself a Probabiliorist,[5] and published several books on this subject since my retractation. But Celano, it appears, did not give this answer to Leon; Vivenzio had, however, given it to Tanucci, who said: "Then I must retract."

When an occasion presents itself, Celano would do well to publish my retractation. I have done so, not in view of our lawsuit, but because I believed it necessary as a matter of conscience. For the same reason, I have also inserted it since in several works; otherwise, I should never have retracted, never have acted against my conscience.

1 Mgr. Antonio Guettler.

2 Bishop of Gaeta.

3 Physician to the royal family.

4 This was the attorney mentioned above.

5 One may see in the various letters of the *Special Correspondence* what is to be understood by the term *Probabiliorist*.

Do not forget to tell this to Celano; because it may easily happen that he again hears others speak of my bad doctrine; and if they wish me to take an oath in regard to this my opinion, I am ready to take it.

The Princess of Cariati, it appears to me, would exercise a great influence upon the queen, for she is the governess of her daughters. See whether we could appeal to the queen for assistance through this channel.

I would have still many things to say to you concerning our affairs; but my mind is troubled at present. I will send you a letter on Saturday by messenger. I bless you.

BROTHER ALFONSO MARIA.

[*P. S.*] You have announced to me the appointment of Mgr. Filingeri.[1]

I know not what to say, nor what to think, and I should feel a scruple to rejoice at his exaltation. I do not rejoice; for, in my opinion, he is not the man who will render great services to the diocese of Naples. I, therefore, send you a sheet with my signature; write upon it, I beg you, a letter, such as you think to be suitable; then carry it yourself to Monsignor from me.

You would also do well to go in search of Mgr. Testa; tell him the extremity to which we are reduced; that will, at least, serve us to receive some counsel. And, if you wish me to write to him that he should interest Tanucci in our favor, let me know your desire; but, meanwhile, you may tell him that now is the time to help us.

If one could only find means to address a new petition to the king, that the cause may be returned to the Chamber! Yet I believe that at present no petition will be accepted.

However, speak of this to the lawyers. We could, at least, present some request; this would be the means

[1] Mgr. Serafino Filingeri, Archbishop of Palermo, was appointed Archbishop of Naples on January 29, 1776.

of gaining some time while our enemies seem to hurry, as they are impatient to bring about our ruin.

But God is here, and my confidence in him is not shaken. I have also confidence in the Blessed Virgin, who can do all things with God.

I send you some pictures and a little work for the sister of Signor Vivenzio.

After the original preserved in the archives of Father General at Rome.

LETTER 838.

To the Same.

Disquietude of the saint.—Reasons why he wishes that Tanucci should be called upon.

NOCERA, January 26, 1776.

I greatly fear that God wishes to chastise us and to destroy our work, for things, I see, are taking an unfavorable turn.

We should, it seems to me, call upon Tanucci as soon as possible and enlighten him on the question of our having purchased property. As long as Tanucci is persuaded that we have certainly acquired property and violated the ordinance of the Catholic king, we shall be sailing against the wind, for Tanucci will always regard us as culpable; and thus we have nothing to hope. It is this bad impression made upon the minister which has dictated, I believe, so many decrees of which we are the victims.

Only our enemies have been heard, and we have not yet spoken: this is our misfortune. Even the president believes us guilty as to the purchasing of property, as he himself told the Cardinal; and the poor Cardinal did not know what to answer. His Eminence has set about to help us; he even wishes to call upon Tanucci; but we must point out to him the answers, either

particular or general, that he is to give. For my part, I am ready to write to the confessor of the queen; but we must wait till she has given audience to the Cardinal.

Since, before seeing Tanucci, you wish to wait till the report of Leon has appeared, I do not wish to be obstinate in my way of looking at things. But I cannot understand why, by speaking to Tanucci before the report is given, we should provoke the issuing of the ordinance of which you speak; namely, that the three ministers should send in their report together, and thus form the judgment of the Junta.

I do not wish to be obstinate and I yield to necessity; but I fear that this delay will be the cause of a new misfortune. If, on the contrary, we went to see Tanucci and if he allowed himself to be visibly impressed by our remarks, Leon and others might lay aside their anger towards us. But, I fear that the devil will make every effort to prevent this interview with Tanucci, in order thus to conduct us to our ruin. . . .

I should, according to you (and you repeat the request), call upon Tanucci personally. But, my dear Father, I am, you very well know, only a corpse. Even last night my asthma and my palpitation of the heart were so violent, that I believed I was dying.

There is no doubt that I am ready to give my life to prevent the destruction of our work, which is the work of God; but there is question of evident danger of death, and to determine me to set out, an extreme necessity would be required. . . .

I had hoped to find repose at Nocera; but I have found a thousand thorns that leave me not a moment's peace. May God be always praised!

My head is so exhausted that I must have constantly near me a wet cloth to prevent giddiness or fainting, to which I am exposed owing to the multitude of letters that I have to write. You will perhaps say that I would do better

not to burden myself with all this correspondence; but what can I do? I am Superior; if I were not, I would leave this work to another. But, as I hold this office, I should feel a scruple, if I did not communicate the lights that God gives me; for God gives to Superiors knowledge that he does not grant to others, and it is this thought that makes me write so many letters.

Tannoia, Book iv. Chapters ii. and iv.

LETTER 839.

To Canon Giuseppe Simioli, at Naples.

Missions at Naples and its environs.—Disquietude of the saint on this subject.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

NOCERA, February 22, 1776.

Reverend and Dear Sir: I had read with very great joy the beautiful plan of missions which your zeal has arranged, and I had hoped that all would be realized during this Lent; for I was certain that our new archbishop [1] would fully approve of all the arrangements made in reference to the capital and its environs.

I learn now that everything is in the state of uncertainty.

I know, on the other hand, and everybody knows as well as I do, that Naples is spiritually in a very deplorable state. You have already remedied an evil in regard to confessors, since before this even confessors were wanting. But the missions that you had arranged were another subject of hope, and I counted on them for the moral improvement of Naples. Hence, I am greatly afflicted, seeing affairs thrown into such confusion, and, therefore, I write to you to receive some consolation.

Allow me to express a desire: induce in a kind way the

[1] Mgr. Filingeri, Archbishop of Naples.

new pastor of the diocese to have during this Lent those missions given which you have arranged.

It is true, the Lenten sermons will be preached; but they rarely bring about conversions, especially among the humbler class of people.

I should, then, desire to know whether there is still hope. This would be to me a solace in the affliction that oppresses me, when I consider all these miseries.

You are, I know, very busy; please, then, if you have not time to write to me, or, to have some one else to write, to send me a word of consolation by the priest who will present you this letter.

Pardon me the trouble that I have given you, and recommend me to Jesus Christ. Please accept, my dear Canon, the expression of my profound respect.

Your very devoted and very grateful servant,

ALFONSO MARIA DE LIGUORI, *Bishop.*

After an old copy.

LETTER 840.

To a Nun.

Spiritual advice in regard to direction.

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

NOCERA, May 7, 1776.

I have received your second letter, which I found very long. It seems to me that you voluntarily permit yourself to be disturbed for want of conformity to God's holy will.

It is God who is to save you, and not your confessors. As for the things that are prescribed for you by obedience, such as prayer, Communions, etc., continue them as you have done hitherto.

If anything new occurs, it will be well for you to consult

some director, or even your ordinary confessor. Thus you can sanctify yourself without Father N. or without Father N.; otherwise, you will always be disquieted, and you will go backward instead of advancing. God never abandons a soul that wishes to belong entirely to him.

You must not depend on me any longer for direction; my head is very weak, and I can read but little. However, as you desire a general rule, I here write it down for you in a few words.

Besides the meditation in common, make another in private, which is to last an hour, or at least half an hour. Make a half-hour's or a quarter of an hour's spiritual reading. Continue to communicate at least three times a week, and oftener during the novenas.

Regulate the rest according to the little book that I send you.

Pray to Jesus Christ to grant me a good death, since my end is approaching. I bless you, and remain, etc.

After an old copy.

LETTER 841.

To the Priest Don Vincenzo di Maio, Professor at the University of Naples.

He begs him to protect the persecuted Congregation and to procure for him the favor of Canon Simioli.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

NOCERA, May 5, 1776.

Reverend and Dear Sir: Father Angelo Maione, my companion in the Association of the Most Holy Redeemer, has given me an account of your merit; he spoke of your piety, your learning, your zeal for the salvation of souls.

I should have, therefore, liked to offer you in person my

respects and acknowledgments; but I am prevented from doing so by my advanced age and my infirmities, which have stiffened my whole body, keeping me imprisoned in an arm-chair.

I have, then, made up my mind to write to you. I come to solicit the aid of your prayers, and, also, to ask you to say, when an occasion presents itself, a good word in our favor to Canon Simioli, who holds you in high esteem.

You are not ignorant, my Reverend Sir, of the great danger that threatens us. Perhaps we are going to be driven from all our houses, and are going to see the annihilation of the work of our missions, through the intrigues of the Baron of Ciorani, Don Niccola Sarnelli. The latter wishes, in fact, to appropriate a vineyard, which one of his brothers formerly bequeathed to us for the maintenance of one of our houses, situated in the territory of Ciorani. As he could not succeed, he accuses us to his royal Majesty of having transgressed (but these transgressions are purely imaginary) the ordinance of the Catholic king, who has allowed our four houses in the kingdom the right to live together and to give missions.

I should gladly give up to the baron the vineyard that he claims, but that is impossible, since it does not at present belong to us; in fact, it belongs to the king, because, as sovereign, he disposes of works of public utility, and it is he who, from the revenues of this vineyard, has assigned to us an income to enable us to live.

I am aware that Canon Simioli feels compassion for us, for his kindness is well-known. Hence, I would have liked to thank him in a special manner, but I know that he is continually occupied, and I do not wish to be a burden to him. Be, therefore, so kind as to thank him specially in my name. I ask you again to induce him to come to our

assistance as much as he can, for he can assist us most efficaciously under present circumstances.

You also know, my dear Sir, that several persons have accused my companions and me of belonging to the school of the Probabilists and to the school of the Jesuits. It is said, among other things, that among us no one studies, and that, therefore, we are a body of ignorant men.

But that is not true. Would to God that all religious Orders had their studies so well arranged as those of our young men! The latter, after the course of Latin and of rhetoric is finished, study philosophy during two years; then, during two other years Scholastic Theology, and finally, they have during two more years Moral Theology.

As for the doctrine of the Jesuits, we do not follow them, either in Scholastic or in Moral Theology; for we are not Probabilists, but true Probabiliorists. To undeceive the public, I had to publish a short exposition of the system [1] that we follow. I send with my letter a copy of it, and I beg you to have the Canon to read it.

But, above all, I ask you to recommend me to Jesus Christ. Beg him to deliver us from the imminent peril, to which we are exposed, of seeing our work destroyed. This work has rendered the greatest services to the poor people of the country, and this throughout the whole kingdom; for we unceasingly move through the mountainous countries; we penetrate as far as the huts of the shepherds; we evangelize the hamlets that are most deprived of spiritual help.

Pardon me, my dear Sir, for having written you at such length. I am at your service for anything that I can do

[1] This is likely the little work published in 1774 against Abate Magli under the title: "Dichiarazione del sistema che tiene l'autore intorno alla regola delle azioni morali"—Exposition of the System followed by the Author relatively to the Rule of Moral Actions.

for you, and I beg you to accept the expression of my profound respect.

Your devoted and grateful servant,

ALFONSO MARIA, *Bishop.*

After the original, the property of his Eminence Cardinal Guglielmo Sanfelice, Archbishop of Naples.

LETTER 842.

To his Cousin, Sister Maria Antonia de Liguori, a Nun at Naples.

He thanks her for a little present that she has made him.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

NOCERA, May 9, 1776.

I have received the beautiful present of queen's biscuit and of Spanish bread. The Spanish bread will be of service to me when I take my chocolate in the evening. As for queen's biscuits, they do not agree with my stomach, and I have given them to a friend to whom I am under great obligation. The queen's biscuits of S. Chiara are, I know, exquisite and their reputation is established.

I thank you, therefore, very much for these two presents.

I have specially recommended you to Jesus Christ; please also to pray for me in a particular manner.

I remain, Reverend Mother,

Your very devoted servant and cousin,

ALFONSO MARIA DE LIGUORI, *Bishop.*

After the original in possession of the Reverend Mother Francesca Cattaneo, Princess of S. Nicando, Abbess of S. Chiara at Naples.

LETTER 843.

To Father N.[1] in the House at Scifelli.

The Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer will not have its future assured, till it passes beyond the limits of the kingdom of Naples.

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

[NOCERA], May 30, 1776.

My dear Father: The houses in the kingdom of Naples, except the house of Benevento,[2] can give but little stability to the Congregation, because they do not form a body and are only held together by a slender thread.

At present we must support them as much as we can; but to speak plainly, if the Congregation were not established outside of the kingdom of Naples, it would never be a Congregation. You have received from God the extraordinary vocation to sustain this Congregation. I have but little time to live; it will devolve upon you to think of giving it stability, after I am gone.

The Bishop of Veroli esteems you highly; but as he is old, we should, as long as he is alive, endeavor to arrange matters as much as we can. Therefore, as soon as the missions are finished, come to an understanding with Father N. and with Father N., if you think fit; then speak to the bishop. If it be necessary afterwards to speak to the Pope,[3] who has a great affection for me, we shall have no time to lose. It may be that I am speaking at random, as I am ignorant of what is going on there; hence, before going to Naples, consult together, speak to the bishop, and then write to me. Neither you nor Father N. should set out before informing me.

1 Father Francesco Antonio de Paola or Father Gasparo Caione.

2 S. Angelo de Cupolo.

3 Pius VI.

If, however, you think that it would be absolutely useless to see Father N., act as you think best; but, if you think that his assistance may be of use, let him know in my name that he must not take his departure without having my permission first.

Still, I wish that you be then acting Superior; but, if for some particular reason, you should judge differently, do as you think will be for the best.

You will, therefore, not set out at present, and I leave it to you, whether or not you should have Father N. to come to Naples; for I am writing to him, that he should make arrangements with you about this matter. I beg you to send me an answer as soon as possible, in order that I may govern myself accordingly.

I bless you, and remain, etc.

After the Roman edition.

LETTER 844.

To Father Gasparo Caione, at Scifelli.

He recommends to him the projected foundation at Torrice in the diocese of Veroli.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

NOCERA, June 5, 1776.

I was very sorry to hear, dear Reverend Father, of your illness at this time. As I have already written to you, we stand in need of you to put the affairs of the Romagna in a better condition.

If it be necessary that you go to Naples to seek for remedies, you should go. But, I repeat, *if it be necessary.*

Try, however, before your departure to have an interview with the Bishop of Veroli, about which I have written to you; endeavor to obtain some weighty guarantee for the foundation at Torrice. Have an understanding on this

point with Father de Paola, and write to me at once; for having no information about this affair, I am in a state of complete uncertainty, and am speaking without knowing what the affair is, or what we may hope for.

Meanwhile avoid fatiguing yourself, but write to me.

I bless you.

BROTHER ALFONSO MARIA.

After the original preserved in the archives of Father General at Rome.

LETTER 845.

To Don Michele N.

(Letter written by order of the saint.)[1]

He promises him his prayers.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

Convent of St. Michael [NOCERA], June 30, 1776.

My very dear Don Michele: I write you in the name of the bishop, and I offer you his affectionate regards. He will pray, he says, for the perseverance of Signor Pietro, your brother, without forgetting the wants of your family, of your children, and of the city in which you live.

This is what I am charged with writing to you. Monsignor salutes you, and as for myself, very honored Sir, I have the honor to be with profound respect

Your very devoted servant,

BROTHER FRANCESCO ANTONIO ROMITO,
of the Most Holy Redeemer.

After an old copy.

[1] From August 13, 1758, St. Alphonsus was often obliged to dictate his correspondence. His secretary for important affairs, above all, during his episcopate, was usually Brother Francesco Antonio Romito, on whose discretion he could rely.

LETTER 846.

To the Priest Don Vincenzo di Maio, Professor at the University of Naples.

The saint wishes that a Manual of Moral Theology should be composed.—He rejoices at the success of the missions given at Naples.—Rule to be followed in accepting dignities.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

NOCERA, July 4, 1776.

I have received your much esteemed letter, which tells me of the great favors for which we are indebted to Canon Simioli. I do not write to the latter, as I fear to importune him; but I beg you, my dear Sir, to offer him my sincerest thanks, for your letter afforded me great consolation.

As for the *Monitum* in question, my companions and I, wishing thereby also to please his Eminence Cardinal Banditi [Archbishop of Benevento], have resolved to publish a new work of Moral Theology; but we shall make it briefer than the Moral Theology already published, and it will be about the size of the printed page that I have sent you.

I have told my confrères that, on account of the violent pains in my head, I could not charge myself with the writing of this new Moral Theology; I have, therefore, confided this care to one of our Fathers who is able to undertake such a work.[1] I have even sent him word to leave Sicily, where at Girgenti he and his companions are giving a mission, which I requested them to give in accordance with the order of the king, our master.

Hence, I am expecting said companion to arrive soon, and I will tell him to begin the work. As for this book, I

[1] This Father was Pietro Paolo Blasucci. We do not know whether this Manual was composed; but it is certain that it was not printed.

wish at least to revise myself all that will be written during my life-time. I say this, because I am extremely depressed; and, on the other hand, in order to write a work on the plan that has been adopted, time is needed, even with the assistance of some confrères appointed by me. Add to this that prolonged application has become impossible for me.

I have heard with great joy of the magnificent results of the nine missions which had been arranged by the Canon [Simioli] and for which I greatly feared, because of the change of affairs. I have, also, been greatly delighted with the news from France, especially the news of the gentlemen in Parliament.[1] This I regard as a great miracle.

I feel very happy, my dear Sir, that you are directing the Duchess of Montenero. She continued to write to me; but how can I direct her from afar and without knowing the particular wants of her soul? She is indeed a person truly pious and I recommend her to you.

You would like, you tell me, to continue to labor for souls and to be exempt from dignities. I praise your good desire; but when the dignity comes from God, without any seeking on our part, and when, besides, the confessor bids us accept it, we should do the will of God.

Again, I beg you to recommend me to Jesus Christ; for this very morning, while dictating this letter, I felt very bad. Ask for me the grace of a good death, and please

1 Perhaps this refers to the fall of Minister Turgot, which happened on May 12, 1776. Parliament had rejected the political programme, which was to introduce into French legislation liberty of conscience, liberty of teaching, liberty of the press, in a word, all that was extolled as the conquests of '89. It was needless for Voltaire to write: "I have just read the masterpiece of M. Turgot; it seems to me that here is a new heaven, a new earth." Louis XVI. dismissed the minister, and the revolutionary plans of the *Philosophers* were momentarily baffled.

accept the expression of profound respect with which I have the honor to be, my dear Sir,

Your very devoted and grateful servant,

ALFONSO MARIA, *Bishop.*

After an old copy.

LETTER 847.

To Sister Maria Angela Rosa Graziano, in the Monastery del SS. Rosario, at Naples.

He wishes to know how she regulates her spiritual affairs.

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

NOCERA, July 14, 1776.

Gloria Patri! that at last, after so long a time, I am able to see again a letter from you, but a letter that is full of sad things, of sickness, and of sudden deaths.

I have recommended to God the soul of your brother, and I shall do this better to-morrow at my Mass.

On the other hand, I have learned to my great joy of the change that has come over the son on the occasion of the death of his father. Let us pray to God to grant him perseverance.

Now, I wish to have an explanation of the following mystery: During the lifetime of Don Michele you wrote me about so many things that you had on your conscience, and for a long time you have not written a word about them.

I wish to know whether you have a director, and whether you frequent holy Communion.

As for the sweetmeats, I do not wish to have any more of them; I am now reduced to such a condition as not to be able to eat even a small biscuit; sometimes I can scarcely take a little chocolate without cinnamon.

Therefore, all that I desire is, that you inform me whether you behave in such a manner as to give me pleas-

ure, and that you pray for me, who am near my death. You also are approaching death. I wish that you should meet it with cheerfulness and not as you are wont to do in other grave matters, with a trembling heart. We are dealing with a God full of goodness, why should we fear?

I bless you. Recommend and have recommended to Jesus Christ the lawsuit of our Congregation, which is soon to be pleaded.

Believe me, Reverend Mother,

Your very humble servant,

ALFONSO MARIA, *Bishop.*

[*P. S.*] Forward the little work sent herewith to Sister Maria Aurelia with the letter accompanying it. I have already sent you a copy.

After an old copy.

LETTER 848.

To the Priest Don Vincenzo di Maio, Professor at the University of Naples.

Joy that he experiences at the wise regulations of the new Archbishop of Naples.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

NOCERA, August 19, 1776.

Reverend and Dear Sir: The illness of the Duchess of Montenero has also greatly affected me. On the other hand, I have read with great consolation the very wise regulations of our most excellent archbishop, especially the regulation concerning the studies. Our dear Canon Simioli has had, no doubt, a great, and perhaps the greatest, share in making them. May God be praised for this!

I feel compassion for you on account of the pain that is caused you by the state of your penitent. I pray to God that, if it be conducive to his glory, he restore to

this lady the use of reason, for her life was always most edifying.

If I can render you any little service, I shall be at your command. Do not forget me at your holy Mass; for my part, I do not forget to pray to Jesus Christ for you.

Please accept, my dear Sir, the expression of my profound respect.

Your very devoted and grateful servant,

ALFONSO MARIA DE LIGUORI, *Bishop.*

[*P. S.*] I feel very grateful to you for the three printed papers that you have sent me; I was very anxious to read them.

After an old copy.

LETTER 849.

To Father Francesco Antonio de Paola, Superior of the new House at Frosinone.[1]

He refuses, for fear of the royal government, to deliver letters of affiliation.—Joy that the foundation at Frosinone causes him.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

NOCERA, September 18, 1776.

I answer your last letter, in which you ask me to send you three sheets bearing my signature for affiliations.

[1] Frosinone was the chief place of the province or delegation of this name in the Pontifical States. The benevolence of its inhabitants towards the sons of St. Alphonsus manifested itself in a striking manner in consequence of a mission that had been given them. They offered the Redemptorist Fathers a church and an adjoining building with a view that they should establish a foundation. The magistrates of the commune informed the holy founder of this decision, and solicited his approbation in the following letter:

"Right Reverend and Dear Sir: The Fathers of the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer, very worthy sons of your Lordship,

But we have reflected that these *affiliations* are in use only among monks, but not among congregations of priests.

Send me the names of the gentlemen who desire to participate in our works. I shall have them recommended to Jesus Christ by the Community in a very particular manner. But those letters patent might injure us, if the ministers of Naples come to hear of them. You know very well through what difficulties we are passing, and do not forget to pray every day that we may obtain the grace to surmount them.

I see with pleasure that the gentlemen of Frosinone continue to honor us with their benevolence.

have given a mission in this city with a success so splendid, so extraordinary, that the people have asked that we should cede to them the church and the hermitage of *Beata Vergine delle Grazie*, abandoned by the discalced Augustinian Fathers, who accepted them four years ago for the purpose of constructing a convent there. This request has been favorably received by the Municipal Council, and we believe it our duty to inform you of this. In order that a resolve, so important for the salvation of souls, may bear fruit, we shall, we assure you, make all the efforts that our devotedness will inspire us to make. May it please your Lordship to accept the expressions of very sincere devotion, and of loyal attachment which our people have vowed to show to your very worthy sons. Honor us with your consent, and we beg you to appoint as the first subjects of this house Fathers Paola and Constanzo. In view of their personal qualities and the particular affection that is exhibited to them, by all classes of society, they could more easily and quickly than others obtain the necessary supplies, such as cement and other materials for the building of a good house, such as we wish, for a durable foundation.

We are happy, your Lordship, to place ourselves at your command, and, asking you to obtain for us heavenly blessings, we are with most profound respect and veneration,

Your Lordships very humble,
devoted, and grateful servants,
The Members of the Municipal Council.

FROSINONE, June 22, 1776."

I recommend them all especially to our Lord at Mass, those, at least, who favor us and come to our assistance in a particular manner.

I have written to Cardinal Castelli. I have asked him to intervene in our favor and to obtain for us the Pontifical approbation for the two hundred *scudi* of income assigned to us by Monsignor di Veroli.

Tell me, whether missions have been asked of you, and often send me news.

I bless you, my dear Father, and all your subjects.

BROTHER ALFONSO MARIA.

[*P. S.*] On the 1st of next October, apply two Masses to the house at Frosinone, that of Father Volpicelli and that of Father Briscione, who will be ordained priests on Saturday.

After an old copy.

LETTER 850.

To Father Angelo Maione.

Concerning the lawsuit.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

NOCERA, October 14, 1776.

I at first told you, not to press the affair of the lawsuit; but now do what you think will be best. I bless you.

BROTHER ALFONSO MARIA.

After the original preserved in the archives of Father General at Rome.

LETTER 851.

To Father Gasparo Caione.

He sends him a manuscript and asks him to finish it.--Recommendations relative to a book of Sunday sermons.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

[About the 20th of October, 1776.]

My dear Don Gasparo: I have studied your book on St. Michael, and have tried out of this material to compose a short and popular novena, in honor of the holy archangel, my protector.

I have written it in the copy-book which I send you; yet it does not please me, because it is confused and badly arranged. Besides, as I am at present suffering from my head, I cannot give to this work the form that I should wish.

Therefore, my dear Father, who are so devoted to St. Michael, be so kind as to take the trouble, this winter, to arrange this novena as you may think best. You may change everything, both substance and form, but let it be short and no more than a sheet and a half of printed matter [for each meditation].[1]

[1] Father Caione, in fact, composed this novena and had it printed a short time after the death of St Alphonsus. In his preface he enumerates the saints that distinguished themselves by a particular devotion to the glorious archangel; then he adds: "Such was, finally, in our days, to pass over others in silence, the venerable Founder of our Congregation, Mgr. Don Alfonso de Liguori, as celebrated by his sanctity, as he was by his learning. Not satisfied with having chosen the holy archangel as one of the protectors of his rising Institute, he made him the patron, after the Most August Trinity and the Most Blessed Virgin, of the third house that he founded; I mean the house established in the city of Nocera. Every year he there celebrated in a solemn manner the feast of St. Michael, and had it preceded by a fervent novena, during which particular prayers were recited in honor of the glorious archangel."

I should like . . . . [*Here some lines are wanting, having been torn off.*]

Let me know, how is the Archbishop of Conza. Here it is said that he is in declining health.

Let me also know how you and your companions are getting on.

Father Blasucci has set out for the Romagna in company with Father [Isidoro] Leggio. Father Criscuoli is still here, waiting for Father Amato, in order to go to S. Cecilia [Scifelli].

I bless you, Reverend Father, and all your subjects.

Invite the latter to cast a glance at my *Sunday Sermons*, and to read at least the sermons that treat of subjects more particularly adapted for missions; for they will there find, if not sublime thoughts and a great amount of erudition, yet, at least, many practical things that serve to save souls. Such are, for example, the sermons on Scandal, on Sin, on Relapse, on Death (a practical Sermon on Death, treated in a manner different from that found in other books). Such is also the sermon on Hell, and especially the sermon on the Loss of God. Wherever I have preached this last sermon, I have drawn tears from the eyes of the most hardened. I do not say that your Fathers should read all the Sunday sermons; let them only cast a glance . . . . . on the practical sermons such as . . . Temptations of the devil to induce men . . . . [*Three lines are wanting, having been torn off.*]

But I have the evil fortune of seeing my books read by strangers, while my brethren do not read them under the pretext that nothing good can be drawn from my sermons.

As for myself, I know one thing; it is, that in the

The little work just mentioned, appeared under the title: "Novena in Honor of the Archangel St. Michael," by Father Gasparo Caione of the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer. It has been republished by G. Marietti (Turin, 1863.)

sermons of other authors I find few practical things that touch the heart; and these practical things I borrowed, either from books composed by servants of God, or from innumerable sermons, which I have heard and the authors of which preached Jesus Christ crucified. On returning home, I used to make a note of these things, and later I had them printed. They are all to be found in my *Sunday Sermons* and in the *Preparation for Death.*

Some of us, I learn with regret, have introduced among us a florid style, and little by little the familiar and popular style has been abandoned. It is, however, this latter style that has made people hitherto say that, wherever we have gone, our missions have produced results different from those of other missionaries.

Please, Reverend Father, have read to your companions, when assembled, all that regards preaching.

I bless you and your Community.

BROTHER ALFONSO MARIA.

After the original preserved in the archives of Father General at Rome.

LETTER 852.

To Father Pietro Paolo Blasucci, in the House at Frosinone.

He reposes entire confidence in him and puts into his hands the future of the two houses established in the Pontifical States.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

[NOCERA, October 24, 1776.]

I received your letter this morning; it afforded me great pleasure, as I was ardently longing to hear from you.

You are right: the Brief of the Pope, as I have already written to those among us, who greatly rejoiced thereat, does but one thing: it approves the income assigned to our Fathers during the time that we shall live at Frosinone.

However, I sincerely thank God for it, since the Pope did not at first wish to grant this approbation, but afterwards gave it through the good opinion that he has of us.

This Brief is at least a beginning, and it will encourage us in the hope, that in the course of time, this house will be formally approved by the Pope. Let us leave all in God's hands.

I represent to myself our Congregation as a little vessel in the middle of the sea, beaten on every side by the winds; and I expect that God will make us know where he wishes to conduct it and to establish it definitively. If he wishes that it should go down, I say now and will always say: *Blessed may always be his holy will!*

I am, moreover, very happy to see you, my dear Father, in the place where you are and in charge of these two houses.[1] If you were not there, I should have much less confidence.

I see with pleasure that you wish to call upon Abate Eugenio to obtain information from him. I wish you also to visit lawyer Buonpiani; he loves us, he is familiar with Roman affairs, and he will easily find occasions to speak to experienced persons who can give advice. We should, in fact, at present try to find out which way will more surely conduct us to the object, at which we are aiming.

As for the building, I have received the plan of Brother Stefano, and I admire the ability of this Brother. I shall show his plan to Cimafonte; but the latter, I think, will have to make a few changes, as the space at our disposal is small. I shall send all to the architect and give you his answer.

Meanwhile, my dear Father, continue the work that has been begun. As for the work and all the affairs of this house, follow, I beg you, the plan which you have

[1] The houses at Scifelli and Frosinone.

resolved upon; for in regard to everything, yes, *everything*, I rely on your judgment.

Canon de Roberto [1] has not sent me any more money, as I expected that he would. I have, therefore, written to him somewhat sharply, and my letter, I hope, will not be without fruit. When you are short of resources, write to me, and tell me what you need, the way in which I should send it, and all will be done secretly between you and me.

According to what the Fathers write, the Bishop of Veroli is probably with you at the present time. Give him my kindest regards, and tell him that I do not write to him in order to avoid being importunate.

When you have time, I should wish you to go to see the house of S. Cecilia [Scifelli], to examine all that concerns it, and afterwards report to me.

I repeat, my dear Father, that at S. Cecilia you should take all the measures that may appear to you to be suitable. But, be so kind as to write to me from time to time; you will thereby give me great pleasure.

Yesterday Father [Diodato] Criscuoli set out with Father [Francesco] Amato for S. Cecilia. The Fathers destined for the missions at Caserta and Maddaloni have also left the house, and in a few days other Fathers will depart for the mission at Aversa.

Thus I shall be left alone. Brother Pasquale has also left us to go to Girgenti; but probably he has not yet sailed, for a violent storm is raging.

I conclude, and I do not cease to pray to God to grant you patience and light, to carry the work to a successful end, if it be his will.

I well know that the beginnings are weak; but from weak beginnings God, when he wishes, makes great works to rise, and I hope with the help of the Blessed Virgin Mary that this will be the case with those houses. They

[1] See Letter 836.

are, it is true, not well established at present, but the love that the bishop [1] bears us, gives me great hopes; for in such works the Lord avails himself of his ministers.

If it be necessary for me to write to the bishop, let me know, for I will write at once; but point out to me in detail what I should say to him.

I bless all my brethren at Frosinone and you, my Reverend Father, in particular.

BROTHER ALFONSO MARIA.

[*P. S.*] Father Maione wrote to me that he would call upon me on Monday, but the day has passed by, he has not made his appearance. Perhaps a new accident has occured in the course of the process, which will cause us great embarrassments. The little vessel will, no doubt, have to bear up against a new storm. May God protect us!

After reflection, I think it better for me not to write to the architect; for sixteen rooms are being erected according to the design, and, therefore, he has nothing to add nor to retrench. I will write to him later on, when the main building will be begun.

Do you wish me to return Brother Stefano's plan?

I should like to know how it is in regard to the piece of land, which the priest Ciceroni [2] wished to give us, as he wrote to me. How is it that, as you write, it cannot be obtained? But I hope that the Canon will re-consider the matter, since he has promised to bestow the property upon us.

After the original preserved in the archives of Father General at Rome.

[1] The Bishop of Veroli, Mgr. Jacobini.

[2] Canon Ciceroni of Frosinone. St. Alphonsus addressed to him a long letter, which is found in the *Special Correspondence*.

LETTER 853.

To Don Domenico Ruggiero, at Corleto Perticara.

He requests him to apply to Father Gasparo Caione for a mission.

NOCERA DE' PAGANI, October 25, 1776.

My Dear Sir: I received your much esteemed favor, and I would say that I am a poor old man, who knows neither which Fathers are at Caposele, nor whether their labors will permit them to give you a mission at the present time.

However, you can write to Father Gasparo Caione, the Superior of the house at Caposele, and thus you may be able to arrange the time for a mission at Corleto.

I recommend myself to your prayers, and I remain, my dear Sir, with profound respect,

Your very devoted and grateful servant,

ALFONSO MARIA DE LIGUORI, *Bishop.*

After an old copy.

LETTER 854.

To Father Pietro Paolo Blasucci, in the House at Frosinone.

He speaks to him about the house at Frosinone and rejects the idea of establishing a foundation at Rome.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

[NOCERA, October 27, 1776.]

My dear Father Pietro: I have just received your second letter, dated October 20. It gave me great pleasure, and I must briefly say that the whole letter pleased me: the ideas, expressions,—all is satisfactory.

I thank God without ceasing that he has led you to Frosinone; you will there moderate the zeal of our con-

frères. According to them the Congregation should come forth from its obscurity, make a noise, and found a house at Rome.

To establish ourselves at Rome appears to me expedient, neither at the present, nor for a long time to come. I pass over in silence the reasons for believing this. When the time comes, I will tell them. You will, moreover, find at the end of this letter a paragraph relative to the advice of Signor Buonpiani.

I was pained to hear that you, dear Father, have been unwell. Take care of your health, I beg you, and use the little remedies that the doctors may think necessary. Your health is morally indispensable at the present time.

Abate Eugenio has then promised, as soon as he returns to Rome, to try to obtain the approbation of the Dataria, and thereby even the definitive establishment of the house at Frosinone. This has afforded me extraordinary pleasure.

It is certain that the present is not the time for you to go to Rome; but after a while this may be necessary.

The greatest secrecy should be kept in regard to all this till further orders. I myself will keep it in regard to my companions of the kingdom, except in regard to two or three, Fathers Villani, Mazzini and Cimino, upon whom I have imposed the strictest silence.

You are perfectly right not to wish to say a word, either to the bishop or to Buonpiani, of your relations to Abate Eugenio, as long as you have not obtained what you want from the Dataria. Nor shall I write to Cardinal Castelli, or to others about this matter; but, if you desire to have from me a letter for Rome, let me know; I am entirely at your service.

If it should be necessary to offer some present to our friends at Frosinone, or to those whom we have at Rome, please tell me; I will send it immediately. And whenever

you need any pecuniary assistance—I repeat what I said in my last letter—inform me, and indicate the sum you need and how I should send it to you.

All the measures taken in order to avoid disputes in the suit relative to the patronage of the little church, appear to me to be excellent.

There is no remedy: *in the beginnings of the works of God we must expect trials;* but as you say, my dear Father, the claim that is made against us, is frivolous. It is proper, however, that we should bear the expenses of the lawsuit. On all the other points, of which you speak to me, I have nothing to say; I rely entirely on you, for I see that you transact all these things with the greatest possible care.

I here add a short paragraph: it refers to the advice that Signor Buonpiani gives us about going to Rome. You may read it to the lawyer or communicate to him my opinion.

Signor Buonpiani advises us, therefore, to go to Rome to secure the House of Retreats, occupied formerly by the Jesuits, now suppressed. I am profoundly grateful to him for the affection that he bears us, and I shall preserve, you may tell him, an everlasting remembrance of it. But before carrying out the project of which he speaks, it will be necessary, in my opinion, to wait for a more propitious moment; for we are not sufficiently known in Rome, and one might see a certain arrogance in the fact that we are pretending to the House of Retreats; the more so, since this house is, without doubt, coveted by more than one Congregation living at Rome.

Here, then, is my advice: for the present we must only look to the permanent establishment of the two houses that we possess in the diocese of Veroli, and, in particular, that of Frosinone. When the latter, in the course of time, becomes firmly established, we shall then see what we can

do. Our Institute has, moreover, for its principal end to evangelize, not important and renowned cities, but country hamlets which are mostly deprived of spiritual help.

After this, if God one day makes known to us that he desires to have us in Rome, we shall obey him.

I conclude, my dear Father, by giving you my blessing for all that you do. I bless your footsteps, your words, all the sufferings, the unpleasantnesses that you will have to endure in these beginnings.

When the bishop returns, kiss his hand for me.

I bless you and your companions.

BROTHER ALFONSO MARIA.

[*P. S.*] Tell me whether you wish me to write a letter of thanks to Abate Eugenio, and at what time I should write to him. I shall, moreover, take care not to send any letter to Rome if you do not expressly tell me to do so.

I have written to Father Constanzo. I have asked him, how it is that the priest Ciceroni does not give us the piece of land, that he promised us, and upon which later on a house must be built.

Do you wish me to send books, sweetmeats, or other articles to the inhabitants of Frosinone, that have given us their assistance, such as Signori Buonpiani, Vespasiani, the members of the municipal council or of the Chapter? I will do nothing without your advice.

When the bishop returns and you have spoken to him, have the goodness to write to me all that can interest me. Besides, write to me often, at least about affairs of importance.

As soon as Abate Eugenio, when he arrives in Rome, is able to solicit the approbation of the Dataria, it will be necessary, I think, that one of you should go to give him all the information needed for the treatment of this affair; for the Dataria wishes, at least, to know the missionaries,

that are to establish the house; and in this case you should go to Rome to settle this matter.

For the rest, my dear Father, you will find many persons capable of giving you counsel in this matter, although you cannot seek the advice of your bishop or of Buonpiani. I rely entirely on your judgment.

After the original preserved in the archives of Father General at Rome.

LETTER 855.

To Father Angelo Maione, at Naples.

He gives him some news.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

NOCERA, October 28, 1776.

I give you some news from Nocera. Don Gaetano [Celano] set out for Vico some time ago, and will return on Saturday. Don Niccola Vivenzio spent a day here. I made his acquaintance with pleasure, for he is truly a man of merit and very just in his views; he expresses himself admirably, when speaking of our affairs.

Don Andrea [Villani] gave him a small box of sweetmeats.

I have written a good letter to Canon Roberto; for I have not seen him since he called upon me last, but I expect him in a few days.

Give me some news about Naples and especially about our affairs. But, if there is nothing important, do not take the trouble to write to me.

I bless you and remain, dear Father . . . .

BROTHER ALFONSO MARIA.

After the original in possession of Cavaliere Giancarlo Rossi at Rome.

LETTER 856.

To the Fathers and Brothers of the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer.

Regulations regarding the conduct of the Fathers on the missions and at home.

[NOCERA, November, 1776.]

My Fathers and Brethren in Jesus Christ: You see how grave are the circumstances in which we are placed. We are opposed by enemies so powerful that, if God does not protect us, the Congregation will surely be destroyed.

This is altogether the work of the devil, who wishes the destruction of this great work of the missions, because it wages continual war against him. But hell cannot harm us, if we remain faithful to Jesus Christ. It was this consideration which determined me to address to you these counsels.

As the time of the opening of the missions approaches, I thought that I should give you some advice, no less for your own good, than for the good of souls. If we preserve the true spirit of this work, the work will preserve us.

The Superior of the mission should be appointed by the Rector of the house when the Rector himself does not go on the mission; and the choice of this Superior should be made without considering seniority in the Institute.

He that is Superior, should be most exact in the observance of the Rule. He should not choose for himself the most brilliant employments, but those exercises for which he is the fittest. He should be the first to rise in the morning. After meditation he shall take care that the Fathers go to the church together. The subjects should receive from him every mark of charity and cordiality.

The Chapter of faults must never be omitted during the missions. The Superior should punish notable faults even by sending home the subject that commits them. It is especially necessary to punish faults against obedience, and make a

report to me or to the Father Vicar. Disobedient subjects, far from being useful to the missions, are really an injury to them.

During the time of the missions, of novenas, and of other exercises, visits should not be paid to women, even under the pretext of God's glory, unless the visit is paid to the principal lady of the place; she may be visited by the Superior in company with another Father.

Our confessors must not speak with women outside of the confessional, unless this be done in answering a question in a few words; but especially should they never speak with them alone in their houses. Should it be necessary to converse with any one of them, it must be done in the church with all the modesty and decorum that our holy state demands.

When there is question of reconciling persons that are at enmity with each other, we must not side with either of them. When one of the contending parties is evidently right, the missionary should exert himself to make known the fact, in order that it may become apparent to all.

On the missions, as well as at home, we must not act in the capacity of witnesses, either at the making of wills or in marriage arrangements, unless there is question of putting a stop to a scandal or some other occasion of sin.

When there is a crowd in the church, care must be taken that the confessions of men be heard first and those of the women afterwards, especially on Sundays and holydays of obligation.

I positively forbid on missions the receiving, under whatever pretext, of presents of linen or sweetmeats, even though no use is made of them during the mission.

We must observe the ancient custom in regard to the food. I forbid the receiving of presents of birds, chickens, expensive fish, or the like, and I say as much of all kinds of pastry, whatever may be the rank of the persons that

offer them. We gain more by good example and exact observance of the Rule than even by preaching sermons.

No compensation from parishes, nor any invitations to dine out from the priests or any other person, whether secular or ecclesiastical, shall be received. However, we may accept, for once only, an invitation given by the bishop of the place.

Persons of the place must not be allowed to serve at table, and care should especially be taken, not to admit any one at that time, unless it were a special benefactor or person of high rank; and then let there be reading during the meal, even though it were a day of general Communion.[1]

At table let no one ask for anything special: for this would be a great scandal; it is the Superior's duty to see to the wants of every one.

In the sermons and instructions we should always speak respectfully of every one, particularly of ecclesiastics and of those of high birth. When a priest wishes to go to confession, let everything else be laid aside, in order to wait upon him.

Let the Superiors attentively watch that the preaching be done in the simplest manner, without ostentation, without far-fetched phrases and high-sounding words. They should punish those that fail in this point, and if no amendment follows, the delinquent should be forbidden to preach, even in the middle of the mission. It is simplicity that has made us succeed in our missions up to the present time. Let him that shows eagerness to obtain any office, be refused, and let such conduct be regarded as a scandal. He that manifests such desires, will never produce fruit, for

[1] To understand these rules made by our saint, it must be remarked that in Italy, and especially in the kingdom of Naples, the missionaries usually lived in a house by themselves, in which they were served by a lay-brother, who accompanied them for this purpose.

God does not assist the proud. No one should go on a mission for the sake of preaching and being seen, but only in obedience to Superiors, and to win souls to Jesus Christ.

Every month, during the time of the missions, each one must also make a retreat of one or two days, as has always been the custom.

It is not expedient that all the Fathers of the house should go on missions, a selection should be made. Let the regulations that I have made on this subject be read.

Finally, I especially recommend the work of the missions to all those that are charged with it. Let attention be paid to all that I have said, and let all former customs be observed, so that every fault may be avoided in this work. It would be better to stop the missions than to give them to the injury of the right spirit, with which we should be animated, and to the disedification of the faithful.

I remind all, particularly the Rectors, that we must exactly observe all that has been prescribed by his Majesty, the Catholic king, in his royal ordinance of 1752. Be convinced, that to resist the orders of the prince, is to oppose the will of God himself.

I charge the consciences of the Rectors with the duty of seeing that all the subjects make every year a retreat of ten days, to which they are obliged by the Rule, and which they should make before going on the missions. These ten days of retreat should be made without interruption, unless a cause evidently necessary obliges them to divide it.

If we do not acquire piety for ourselves, we cannot communicate it to others. For this reason all the subjects, even when they remain at home, should every month make a day of retreat. In order to exempt themselves from this, some say, that they are already much given to melancholy; but this disposition vanishes, if we converse with God. I recommend this day of retreat also for the lay-brothers; they have greater need of it than others, because domestic

occupations are of such a nature, that they give them much distraction.

There must also be a Zelator in the house according to ancient custom. Let him be a prudent subject and advanced in years. Let there be a Chapter of faults every Monday. If this be omitted, let the Admonitor notify me.

I positively forbid any subject to keep linen, tobacco, or anything else as his own property, under any pretext whatever. I took an oath not to permit this, as you know. Thus, let everything that comes addressed to a subject, be delivered to the care of the Rector or the Superior of the mission, and every Rector should remember the oath he took in regard to this matter on entering upon his office. This oath maintains poverty and preserves Community-life.

The Rectors must be careful, not to overwork the subjects by too many novenas, triduos, and similar occupations. To remain absent from home too long, leads to dissipation of mind, and injures the health.

When the Rectors send their subjects out of the house, they should provide them with all that is necessary, and should let them understand, that out of the house they must not provide themselves with new things, especially if they be costly. I wish also that there be assigned to them the place where they are to stop on their journey, especially at night, in order to prevent them from wandering to and fro and lodging wherever they may fancy.

Every month an account of conscience must be exacted. Let this point be attended to by the Rectors, because it is but little observed. I wish the Admonitors to be vigilant as to the observance of this Rule, and to write me at once, if it be neglected.

The Superiors of the houses, in which there are clerics, should not distract these young men from their studies by sending them outside for the purpose of preaching.

When a newly ordained priest is to receive the faculties

for confession, he must not be presented to the bishop, until information has been sent to me. I wish first to examine him myself, or to have him examined by others; and if he proves himself capable, I will allow him to be presented to the bishop of the diocese.

Permission to hear the confessions of women should not be granted to a priest who is not yet thirty years of age, unless he has already had the faculties; this is also understood for the time of the missions. I also forbid, that subjects be sent to hear the confessions of religious that are cloistered, unless I have given them express permission. Rectors must be very strict about this point, and they must not often send even those that have been approved by me.

The Consultation must be held every month, as the Rule directs, and an account of the receipts and expenses of the house must be rendered. Let us show ourselves very faithful in observing this point, and never give occasion to any subject to complain.

We should not, through mere fancy, incur expenses; nor should any subject be permitted to do so. Every time that the expenses, even those that are necessary, exceed ten ducats, or if they are to be repeated, they should be subjected to a consultation; and, if those that consult, do not agree, the Rector should positively abstain from incurring those expenses. But in this case the older Fathers may be asked, and then the expenses may be rejected or approved according to their opinion.

Permission must not be granted to the subjects to go to Naples or elsewhere without a real necessity; much less should they be allowed to visit their families. If urgent business requires them to depart, and obliges them to be away from home more than eight days, I must be informed of the matter by letter; and then I will fix the time of absence in proportion to the importance of the case. Experience proves that dissipation of mind usually arises from a want

of seclusion and from anxiety about temporal affairs, which should be attended to by laymen rather than by ecclesiastics.

I warn all those, that are at Naples, not to make useless visits, and not to spend the night elsewhere than in our own house. We must not take meals outside of the house without the permission of the Superior. Let every one return to the house before the *Angelus* in the evening; and the half-hour's meditation, to be made in common, should not be omitted in the evening.

For the examination of young men, wishing to be received, two periods of the year have been fixed, namely, the month of June and the month of September. The Rector, however, should not send to me those that have not sufficient capacity and all the other requisite qualifications.

I exhort all the Superiors of the houses and of the missions to watch over the conduct of the subjects, in order to see that they lead a truly exemplary life, and that they observe not only the Rule, but also all our pious and ancient customs.

In case of breach of observance (I mean when the matter is of moment), if the culprit should not amend after having been reprimanded, I must be informed of this, in order that I may remedy it. I am frightened by the faults of the subjects, more than by the persecutions that assail us. I also entreat each one to fear lest the Lord should also expel him, as he has lately expelled several. I love all the subjects, but I cannot bear with those that will not amend. This would give me scruples of conscience, and I cannot damn myself for any one.

I desire that this letter should be read in Chapter before all the subjects of each house, that each one may be attentive to his duty. This letter should be kept and read every

year in the month of October, before the Fathers set out on the missions.

Tannoia, "Life of St. Alphonsus", Book iv., Chapter vi.

LETTER 857.

To Father Pietro Paolo Blasucci, at Frosinone.

Fall of Tanucci.—Recommendations relative to the houses established in the Pontifical State.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

NOCERA, November 4, 1776.

There has occurred at Naples an event which creates great excitement. I will relate it to you in all its details.

On Saturday, October 26, our king received an order from his father, the Catholic king; and on the following day he communicated to Marquis Tanucci the instructions that had come from Spain.

We are ignorant of the tenor of the note addressed to Tanucci; we know only the decree addressed to the Marquis della Sambuca, son of Camporeale. I have received a copy of it; it is couched in the following terms:

"The king has recognized in the person of your Excellency all the qualities (*I pass over some superfluous words*) required for the high functions of government; you have given sufficient proofs of this in the exercise of your ministry. He has, therefore, chosen you for his Counsellor of State, and has conferred upon you at the same time (with the salaries attached to these different offices) the Secretariate of State and of the royal house, the superintendence of the post-offices, the freehold lands, the Junta of Abuses, and the administration of the property of the Jesuits, which functions have been hitherto exercised by Marquis Tanucci. Orders have been given to Marquis

Tanucci to transfer to your Excellency all that regards his department.—Naples, October 26, 1776.—Carlo de Marco."

Prince di Camporeale has also received another note from the king. His Majesty tells him that he dispenses him from attending the Council of State in view of his advanced age; but that in consideration of his services he gives him the gratuity or salary of Counsellor of State during his life.

The prince has felt very much mortified by this measure, but he consoles himself with the high dignity conferred on his son.

The blow that has struck Tanucci has, they say, come from Vienna, from Rome and also from France. Such is the world. Tanucci has remained Counsellor of State and Superintendent of foreign affairs; but I am now told that the foreign affairs will also be intrusted to Sambuca.

Judge of the agitation that reigns in the whole city of Naples! May God draw from this his greater glory!

I am now reading one of your letters, that is, the third without date, and am now fully informed. I do not send you any instructions; you have everything in your own hands, my dear Father, and your prudence will suffice for all.

I learn with regret that Father Criscuoli has not yet arrived; sickness has, no doubt, detained him somewhere on the road, as three weeks have already elapsed since his departure from this place.

Please tell the Fathers of Scifelli, that, if the Passionist missionaries come to visit them, they should receive them with the greatest cordiality.

I will write to Father Lauria and recommend to him the missions of Sicily.

I am happy that Father Leggio is quiet and content. I send him a special blessing.

But one thing pleases me still more; it is, that under the poor roof of your little house all the Community acts of the Rule are observed. Excellent sign! On the contrary, here in the kingdom, I am pained to see a relaxation from the primitive observance; but I hope to see it regain its vigor before my death.

As for myself, I can say, that I am in better health at the age of eighty-one than I was ten years ago.

Our lawsuit is always at the same point; but the present change of the ministry strongly increases our hopes of having peace.

At present, our Fathers are giving a mission at Caserta. The bishop, Mgr. Filomarino, is delighted; he has even said that he wished to secure for us a house at Caserta; but these are only beautiful thoughts. He has strongly recommended us to D. Carlo de Marco, and he will also recommend us to the king, or at least to the new prime minister, when they all will be at Caserta on the 7th instant. May God have us in his keeping!

I expect Canon Roberto in a few days; he is to bring me some money. If you desire pecuniary help, you must tell me, for I am heartily attached to Frosinone.

As for your missions, it is very probable that you will be asked to give missions to the hamlets of Sora. I learned some time ago, that a mission is expected at San Germano. Father de Paola has been so informed.

I believe it would be conducive to the glory of God, if we made a prudent application to the Abbot of Monte Casino. He had manifested the desire of having missions from us, in case we would consent to give them on his lands. *The glory of God*, I repeat, would be promoted by these labors, for the hamlets, of which I speak, are extremely poor in spiritual help. I would not hesitate, then, to have one or the other mission given entirely at our

expense, and I would send you the amount that you would need.

A word in regard to Abate Eugenio. It would be well for one of you to go to speak to him at Rome at an opportune time, after his stay in the country is over. Perhaps you might go there yourself in company with another Father. Reflect on this and do what you think best.

The affairs at Frosinone appear to be sufficiently arranged; in the course of time, and especially after the bishop's return, they will be arranged even better.

It would be well, it seems to me, to celebrate a novena preparatory to the feast of the Presentation by preaching every day on the Blessed Virgin. At least let a novena be given before Christmas with sermons and exposition of the Blessed Sacrament. This kind of exercises wonderfully reanimates fervor, and attracts even persons that are not devout. But in all these points I rely on your prudence, and I bless you and your companions.

BROTHER ALFONSO MARIA.

After the original preserved in our convent at Dongen, Holland.

LETTER 858.

To Father Angelo Maione, at Naples.

Counsels relative to the Sarnelli lawsuit.—A danger to be avoided.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

[NOCERA, November 4, 1776.]

The mistake has been cleared up: it is not Marquis Tanucci, but the Prince of Camporeale, who has received a dispensation from attending the royal Council.

To come now to our own affairs.

Celano arrived here this evening. He had an interview with Lione, and the latter told him that we were safe.

On the subject of the report, the note added by you to that of Capolongo, has afforded me pleasure. I now expect the answer that Ruggiero will make, when he has spoken to President Baldassare [1]; but, before all, I beg you to go to see Don Niccola Vivenzio, and urge him strongly to visit the president; and, as soon as possible, give him the enclosed letter that I have addressed to him. An interview with Baldassare and Lione will advance our affairs more than a thousand conversations of Celano or of others; we should, therefore, show Vivenzio the greatest deference.

My heart is filled with joy, for it appears to me to be certain that the Blessed Virgin wishes us to come forth from this trial safe and sound.

In the matter of news, write me that which regards the safety of the Congregation; for, as to outside news, it is said that the astounding revolution of the day has already had, and will yet have, many consequences. If anything important should happen, do not fail to inform me of it.

In the meantime let us place ourselves in our Lord's hands, and let us pray that only that may happen, which will promote his greater glory.

Monsignor di Caserta,[2] being satisfied with our missions, has recommended us to Don Carlo de Marco. He even says that he will try to have us established at Caserta. These are beautiful and pious projects, but impossible to execute at the present time.

A very important remark. When we solicit in behalf of our lawsuit the recommendation of certain ladies, let us be careful not to solicit them from persons who may be resting under any evil suspicion. God indeed wishes that we

1 Don Baldassare Cito, President of the Council.

2 Mgr. Niccolò Filomarino.

should employ all honest means; but he does not wish that we should employ means that may give occasion to sin or create a suspicion of it; only on this condition will he lend us his aid. Your Reverence will understand me, and I need not explain myself further.

I bless you and remain . . .

BROTHER ALFONSO MARIA.

[*P. S.*] What follows I write on account of Father Caione. Read the letter destined for Vivenzio; then close it.

It will be useless for you to send me a copy of the note addressed to Tanucci; for Don Gaetano Celano has already acquainted me with its contents.

After the original preserved in the archives of Father General at Rome.

LETTER 859.

To Father Pietro Paolo Blasucci, in the House at Frosinone.

Various negotiations concerning the house at Frosinone.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

[NOCERA, November 11, 1776.]

I have written a long letter by way of Rome and have intrusted it to Don Francesco Massoni, who left us yesterday. The letter is addressed to Father de Paola; but I have told the latter to read the whole of it to you, for it is principally to you that I intended to address it.

Here is an abridgment of its contents. Massoni is of opinion that the affair of the Pontifical approbation should absolutely be terminated as soon as possible, and that the iron should be struck while it is hot; for, if now we have well-founded hopes, they may disappear in the course of time. This is also my opinion.

If you have ever been of a different opinion, let me know the fact. I, moreover, think that at the present time we

should give up the missions, if this be necessary, or rather should defer them and conclude the principal affair, that of the foundation. Hence, in one of my letters I said that you should at once call upon Abate Eugenio in company with another Father (the best one would be Father Constanzo, who has already treated with him); and thus this affair could be concluded.

According to what the Abate says, it is to the Dataria that we must address ourselves. I have, therefore, written two letters, one to the Pope to beg him for the favor of the approbation, the other to the present Datario, Cardinal Negroni, to ask him to support my request with the Sovereign Pontiff. I saw this Cardinal at the time of my consecration, and since that time he has honored me with his sincere friendship.

You will receive from Rome these two letters through Don Francesco Massoni. I did not close them, so that you might be able to read them before sending them to their address.

Nevertheless, I send you by way of greater precaution two sheets bearing my signature, in order that you may put these two letters in a better form, if you think proper. You should, moreover, take counsel at Rome with Abate Eugenio on all these points by calling upon him in person; for, according to my opinion, it would perhaps be better to transact everything with the Pope and the Datario without using my letters.

When you have decided to set out for Rome, let me know whether you are going to stay with Signor Massoni, as has been arranged.

Before your departure, it will be necessary, or at least proper in my opinion, for you to go to see the bishop and ask his counsel, if only not to disoblige him after the great services he has rendered us.

Signor Francesco Massoni has said that, if the expense

for expediting the Brief was fifty scudi, that of the Dataria will perhaps be double. He has, therefore, wished, in order to save expense, to procure for us the approbation by way of the Congregation of Bishops and Regulars, or of the Congregation of the Council.

But this idea does not please me; for the Congregation of Bishops has Cardinal Carafa for its Prefect, and the latter is not favorable to us, he has in some way even declared himself against us. As for the Congregation of the Council, it would certainly save us the expense; but I do not know whether we should succeed so easily by this way, as, according to Abate Eugenio, we should by way of the Dataria.

The Bishop of Veroli can give us good advice on this point. In a doubt, moreover, it will always, it seems to me, be better to choose the safer side in this matter; for, as to the question of expenses, God will come to our aid; the more so since, when once the favor has been granted, we may easily obtain from the Pope a diminution. The Datario is, besides, my friend, and he will have a word to say. Reflect on all this, my dear Father, and give me then all the news.

BROTHER ALFONSO MARIA.

[*P. S.*] In the beginning of the foundation Father Constanzo wrote to me, that a priest, named Ciceroni, wished to give us a piece of land next to our present little church, where we thought of building so as to enlarge the convent. But I hear nothing more of this land of Ciceroni. I was told that he is waiting for the consent of his brother.

Let me know how the case stands, for this piece of land seems to be necessary; and, if the brother is opposed to giving his consent, see whether you cannot influence him through some friends.

I have also learned that the Bishop of Sora wishes to favor our houses, in the diocese of Veroli, and to assign the

revenues, that were bequeathed by the Duke of Sora, to provide for the expenses of the mission.

As long as we do not take pen in hand, and do not make out a written and formal act of acceptation, we may go ahead, because we are not bound to render an account of the act of another (*de facto alieno*). But, if it be required that we should accept the bequest by a positive act, we could not accept it, since the bequest would be made in the kingdom; otherwise we would incur the same accusation that we incurred when we formerly accepted at Benevento the bequest made for the missions. We, therefore, do not bind ourselves by any act; but, on the other hand, when money is furnished us, we shall use it to give missions, without, however, acquiring any right to the aforesaid revenues.

The foregoing had been written, when I received a letter from Vicar-General Spoto (he has undoubtedly also written to you). He announces that the Junta of Palermo has rendered a decision altogether in favor of Campofranco. [1] *Amen!* and the missions at Girgenti fall to the ground. How incredible! Marquis Tanucci said that the hundred ounces in no way belonged to Campofranco; and, nevertheless, he intrusts the affair to the council of Palermo, which he knew was quite favorable to Campofranco. But Tanucci has now nothing more to do in this matter.[2] Signor Spoto wished that you should come to Naples as soon as Cardinal Branciforte [3] arrives. I answered him that you could not leave the affairs that you had in hand; but that on the arrival of the Cardinal at Naples, I would have

1 Mgr. Andrea Lucchesi had established an annual income for the missions of our Fathers at Girgenti; but, as we have said (Letter 599, vol. ii., page 311), Prince Campofranco did all he could to annul the arrangement made by the pious prelate.

2 He was no longer Minister of State.

3 Antonio Colonna Branciforte, Bishop of Girgenti since April 15, 1776, was created Cardinal on September 26, of the same year.

Father Maione to speak to his Eminence. I have also written a very strong letter to the Cardinal; but I do not count much on him, the more so since now Campofranco will have in his favor the new minister, Marquis della Sambuca.

After the original preserved in the archives of Father General at Rome.

LETTER 860.

To the Same.

Negotiations relative to the house at Frosinone.—Benevolence of Pope Pius VI. towards the saint and the Congregation.—Various affairs.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

[NOCERA, December 3, 1776.]

I have read your letter; it bears neither date nor signature.

All goes well, and all will be accomplished according to your desire. I have, therefore, forbidden Massoni to make application to the Congregation of Bishops and Regulars, to the Congregation of the Council, or to Cardinal Negroni, before acquainting you with everything.

I will, then, write to Massoni, that I wish to adhere to the first manner of proceeding, namely, that of the Dataria, which we have entered upon through Abate Eugenio, and I will add, that Massoni himself should not say a word about our affairs to a living soul. Be, then, without anxiety concerning Massoni; he will not interfere in the least in the affair of the approbation.

You are right; to-morrow I will leave orders at Naples for eight hams, four pieces of cheese, and a box of sweetmeats. As for the latter article, I wish it to be of the best, and Abate Eugenio will receive from me a box of excellent gingerbread and a cake of roasted almonds. I

will purchase the best quality, in order that nothing may be spoilt on the road, and the sweetmeats may arrive at Rome in a good condition. Enough on this subject.

I am writing to-day to Naples to procure two bills of exchange of twenty and of fifty ducats. For greater security, in case they should be lost on the way, Father Villani has advised me to have them made payable only after the middle of January.

I expected from Canon Roberto, that is, from Sant' Agata, a large sum of money; but I have not received more than two hundred and sixty ducats, and the house at Nocera has already sixty ducats to buy oil and wine, which they needed. I hope, however, to have one hundred and fifty ducats more in the month of March, and perhaps sooner.

I tell you all this in order that you may take into account the expenses, which you must incur to pay the Dataria for the approbation; we shall, perhaps, not be able to settle this matter for less than one hundred and fifty scudi.

In case of need, however, and if you must have a larger sum, I will try to borrow it, and if necessary, at interest.

Take care, then, to inform me; for, till the sale of grain (which will take place in October of next year) I will be able to draw but little from Sant' Agata, but always write to me; I will try every possible means to keep you from being embarrassed.

I send you at once the two bills of exchange, and when you wish to have more money, write to me; I will send you at once whatever I have. You will find enclosed the two bills; please acknowledge their receipt.

As regards the bequest of Sora, here is what I think. We cannot make in writing either a contract, or an act of acceptance. But, if the bishop or the Duke of Sora should wish to bequeath to us the sum in question, it is

certain, that as long as we do not draw up an act of acceptance, we are not responsible for the deeds of another.

In reference to the missions in Sicily, Father Maione is expecting Cardinal Branciforte every day. When the latter arrives, he will give him the letter that I wrote in concert with Don Gaetano Celano. May God take care of the rest! As for the missions that are to be given, either at San Germano, or in the Romagna, take the measures that appear to you to be most suitable.

Lately I sent to the Pope my last two little works, the *Conduct*[1] and the *Theological Dissertations*. The Pope has answered me by a letter, of which I send you a copy. You will see with pleasure what kindness he exhibits to me, and also what affection he bears towards the Congregation. However, I recommended the latter only in a general way without referring to the approbation of Frosinone or to anything else. Read it and have our companions to read it.[2]

1 The saint had dedicated to the Sovereign Pontiff the work entitled: "Wonderful Conduct of Divine Providence in Saving Men through Jesus Christ."

2 The letter of the Sovereign Pontiff was couched in these terms:

"Pius P. P. VI.

To Our Venerable Brother, health and apostolic benediction.

If We have shown you Our liberality in increasing your pension and in diminishing the expenses of expediting the pension, a liberality for which you thank Us most sincerely in your letter, you have, it seems to Us, worthily responded by sending Us two little works which you have offered Us, and of which one has even been dedicated by you to Us personally. Nothing could be more grateful nor more acceptable to Our heart, and We are more thankful for them, than if you had offered Us most precious and magnificent presents. We have as yet only looked over and cast a rapid glance at the pages of these volumes, promising to read them attentively as soon as Our innumerable occupations will permit Us to take breath. We, however, do not doubt that there shines forth in them in a

As Abate Eugenio is, at present, negotiating this affair of the approbation, it is needles for you, dear Father, to go to Rome. I thought that you would have to go there to treat and to conclude with him this negotiation; but, since he writes to you in terms so benevolent, and is even going, as you say, to send you a copy of the Bull, your journey can well be deferred.

I say *deferred;* for I look upon the journey as necessary, as soon as the approbation has been obtained. This will be the means of making known to the Sovereign Pontiff some members of the Congregation, who can be recommended for their talent and their ability; for, so far the Pope knows no one except me, and me he knows only by name and through correspondence. He has only seen Father Lendi and some others when they went to Rome in the Holy Year.

This is the reason why the Pope should have a prolonged interview with you, that he may receive from you a detailed account of our work, and of the difficulties raised against us by our adversaries at Naples. Otherwise the Sovereign Pontiff can form no exact idea of the utility of our work.

Crippled as I am, I cannot call upon the Pope, and the

manner the indefatigable and very ardent zeal, which urges you to provide with all your power for the wants of the flock of Christ; for, if you have abdicated the episcopate, you have certainly abdicated neither the courage nor the solicitude of a bishop. As for your request made to Us that we should grant Our protection and that of the Holy See to the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer, it is just, and in view of your signal piety, it is nothing that We are not ready, willingly to grant to you and to this Congregation. In the meantime, Venerable Brother, receive as a sincere pledge of Our love for you the apostolic blessing, which We give you with all Our heart.

Given at Rome, at S. Maria Maggiore, November 16, 1776, the second year of Our Pontificate.

To Our Venerable Brother Alfonso de Liguori, Bishop.

time is not far distant, when I must pass into eternity. It is you who have to maintain the work; consequently, it is you who should make it known. I believe, that I have sufficiently explained myself, and have no need to say more.

I bless you, dear Father, and all your companions. I beg you to write to me, not regularly every week, but as often as possible; for the letters that I receive from Naples and from Sicily, afford me but little consolation.

As for the box of sweetmeats, I intend to send it at the same time with the other eatables. I intend to spend for it at least five or six ducats, for I wish everything to be good —the gingerbread selected by the nuns, the cake of roasted almonds, and the like. I desire, moreover, everything to be hard, so as to bear the journey, otherwise all will be spoiled when reaching Rome.

As to sending all these things, we had better wait till the feast of St. Lucia, when the nuns offer their presents to the Cardinal. The apothecary will bring them, and it is from him that this box should be procured. All will, then, arrive at Rome about Christmas.

BROTHER ALFONSO MARIA.

[*P. S.*] The hams are now being procured. The whole will be forwarded to Benevento, then to Frosinone.

After the original preserved in the archives of Father General at Rome.

LETTER 861.

To Mother Maria Raffaela della Carità, Superior of the Redemptoristines at Sant' Agata.

He exhorts a sick nun to be patient.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

[PAGANI, December 12, 1776.]

I answer your letter in a few words.

I have heard of the illness of poor Sister Maria Francesca.

Such an illness is difficult to cure, especially when consumption has already advanced.

I will, however, ask God to make her well, if it be for his glory.

I regret to see that the Sister is too anxious to become well; for this excessive desire may cause her numerous temptations.

Exhort her for me to practise holy indifference, and to place herself entirely in the hands of our Lord. It matters not that she is young. How many persons does not God take from this world before malice is able to pervert them!

When the sick person sees herself forsaken by her companions, let her think of our Lord forsaken on the cross. But, on the other hand, the Sisters (at least the Sisters advanced in years, who will not be afraid) should have the charity to assist her.

Let her keep a joyful heart; she will, then, find herself well both in soul and in body.

I bless her and you in the name of our Lord and of the Most Blessed Virgin, and I remain, dear Mother,

Your devoted and most grateful servant,

ALFONSO MARIA DE LIGUORI, *Bishop.*

[*P. S.*] One word more: When the sick Sister is suffering, when she feels troubled, especially, when seeing herself abandoned, she should say: "My Jesus, it suffices that you assist me, with you I hope to be united forever in heaven." In this way she will not lose the fruit of her sufferings, and she will amass for heaven treasures of merits. An act of resignation in her pains is more profitable to her before God than fasts without number and the most severe disciplines.

After an old copy.

LETTER 862.

To Father Francesco Antonio de Paola, at Frosinone.

Kind disposition of the Cardinal Archbishop of Benevento towards the Institute.—Difficulties created for religious and for the clergy by an ordinance of the Neapolitan government.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

[NOCERA, January 2, 1777.]

I have received your letter, and am greatly pleased to learn that you are all in good health. As Father Blasucci has not written to me for a long time, I was afraid that his silence was owing to sickness.

I am also very happy, dear Father, to know that you are well, I am equally glad that you have received the box and the salt meats.

I send you a copy of the *Homo Apostolicus* for Vespasiani. Tell him, that as for Moral Theology, he will find that it contains everything. I have written to Venice for a large work of Moral Theology; but God knows when it will come. I also send you three copies of the *Visits*.

I feel so unwell that I can neither read nor write; I have a continual pain in the head. I have, therefore, ceased to apply myself to anything.

I see with very great pleasure that the affair of the approbation is doing well; not having heard anything about it for a long time, I feared that it had miscarried.

I am, at present, engaged in looking for the amount of money that is to cover the expenses of this negotiation. It is true that at this time of the year very little can be obtained from Sant' Agata, yet I wish to procure two hundred ducats more. I well know that the two half-year's income falls due in October, the time when the revenue is

collected; but God, I hope, will procure for me two hundred other ducats.

Perhaps you already know what Cardinal Banditi, the Archbishop of Benevento, has written to us; if you do not know it, keep what I tell you a secret. He has written that of the seven hundred ducats sent annually by him from Benevento to Rome, to pay, among other things, for the support of the Portuguese Jesuits, he will continue to send four hundred; it is a matter that he will arrange with the Pope (and the Pope will grant him what he wishes). As for the three hundred ducats that remain, he wishes to give them to us, with the promise of giving us the other four hundred on the extinction of the life-annuity of the Portuguese.

The offer was not to be refused; therefore, with one consent Father Cimino, Father Maione, Father Vicar, Father Mazzini, and I, have accepted it. In this way, if our houses of the kingdom have but little income, we shall have, at least, a house that, in the course of time, will be able to support itself.

The Cardinal is at present negotiating the matter with the Pope; but I am certain, that the Sovereign Pontiff will grant what he desires, after he has forced him to take charge of the government of Benevento.

Now about another matter.

At Naples the new government has issued a most rigorous decree concerning the ordination of clerics. No one of them can any longer receive Orders, if there are a hundred priests in his native place, nor, if in his family two brothers or uncles are priests, nor, if the patrimony of the other brothers and uncles is inferior to that of the young man, who desires to enter Holy Orders. In consequence of this ordinance, we are prevented from receiving many good young men, who have come to ask admission. The

Pious Workers meet with the same obstacles, and to their great regret they cannot receive new subjects.

A thought has come to my mind and I should like to know, my dear Father de Paola, whether you could not communicate this thought to Mgr. di Veroli. Please, then, to speak to him on the first occasion, and tell me the result of your interview; I will, then, be able to take measures.

You know that we have the greatest difficulty in sending any one of our Fathers into the Romagna; we have to beg him, to entreat him. Some even refuse to go; and the reason of all this is, that no one wishes to be at a distance from his family.

Could not Mgr. di Veroli adopt these subjects as his own, and attach them to one of the churches of Veroli, Frosinone or Scifelli, so that he can ordain them afterwards? We would thus attain by one journey two excellent objects: we would detach these subjects from Naples, and we would have them ordained in the Romagna. Otherwise, our Neapolitan bishops, frightened as they are, would not ordain them.

I beg you, then, to pay a visit to Mgr. di Veroli, and inform me what answer he gave about this point; but, if he says no, I will not be able to do anything.

I tenderly embrace Father Blasucci, and I rejoice that the affairs begun by him, are progressing favorably.

Do not be sorry for writing to me at times. God knows how much every letter of yours consoles me.

I bless you.

BROTHER ALFONSO MARIA.

After an old copy.

LETTER 863.

To Father Deodato Criscuoli, at Scifelli.

He forbids him to preach Lenten sermons.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

[NOCERA, January 14, 1777.]

I have heard that your Reverence has accepted the preaching of Lenten sermons at Isola, in the diocese of Sora, and Father de Paola at Atina, in the diocese of Aquino. I am displeased that you did not previously inform me of this resolution.

I know very well that these Lenten exercises were not sought for by you, and that they were offered by the parishes; however this may be, in future I do not wish your Reverence, or any one else, to agree to undertake such exercises, especially in the kingdom. Our Institute forbids this, and this kind of preaching would create jealousy in those that are usually engaged in it.

At all events, your Reverence must try to excuse yourself to Mgr. de Sora, and Father de Paola to the Bishop of Aquino, by representing to them my formal prohibition in accordance with our Rule.

I wish you to be solely engaged in missions; they are what God wishes us to give, and not Lenten sermons.

Obey, however great the solicitation of parishes and bishops.

After an old copy.

LETTER 864.

To Father Francesco Antonio de Paola, Superior of the House at Frosinone.

The same subject.

Live Jesus!

[NOCERA, January 1777.]

My dear Francesco: I have received your letter about the Lenten sermons that you wish to preach. Our poverty would seem, it is true, to justify the preaching of such sermons; but, for my part, I do not wish to violate a rule established by our Father, Mgr. Falcoia, under such rigorous conditions. In fact, the strongest reasons forbid me to accept this kind of work.

Let us abandon ourselves to Providence. God, for whom we work, will not allow us even to be wanting a piece of bread.

I conclude, for I do not feel very well this morning.

I bless you and remain, my dear Father . . .

BROTHER ALFONSO MARIA.

After the original preserved in the archives of Father General at Rome.

LETTER 865.

To Father Gasparo Caione, at Caposele.

Concerning Benevento.—Apostolic labors asked for by Cardinal Banditi.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

(*Confidential.*)

NOCERA, January 23, 1777.

You already know, without doubt, that the Archbishop of Benevento is trying at the present time to induce the

Pope to give us the house of the Jesuits in that city with the seven hundred ducats of revenue attached to it. Of this sum he would give us three hundred ducats in the beginning, and the balance of four hundred, would revert to us at the death of the Portuguese Jesuits, to whose support it is now applied.

The archbishop has written to us that he wished to have us in Passion week for his ecclesiastical retreat, and for a retreat to the people in the church where he resides. Your Reverence is appointed to give the first of these retreats, Father Acerra [Lacerra] is to give the second. Of this arrangement I now give you notice.

I have learned that the climate of Caposele does not agree with Father Acerra; it would, therefore, be well to send him to Ciorani.

Please acknowledge the receipt of this letter, so that I may be without disquietude on the subject of the retreats of which I speak.

At Rome, in the Congregation of the Dataria the approbation of the house of Frosinone and that of S. Cecilia [Scifelli] has been proposed; it has been accepted with common consent, without difficulty, and I expect to receive a copy of the Bull shortly.

We shall have to pay a good round sum for this Bull, and my pension is not paid regularly; nevertheless, I hope to find the necessary amount to discharge this debt.

I conclude, Reverend Father, by giving you my blessing.

BROTHER ALFONSO MARIA.

[*P. S.*] I now learn that you intend during Lent to preach to the Congregation of Nobles at Salerno. But, as I have told you, you must necessarily go to Benevento in Passion week. You should previously excuse yourself to those gentlemen of Salerno; for it is much more important for us to satisfy Cardinal Banditi, who, if I mistake not,

wishes to profit by this occasion to begin the foundation projected by him.

A word now about the hundred ducats which that woman has given you. Write to Scifelli that the hundred ducats should be kept there. I will return them to this person here in the kingdom.[1] I cannot pay this amount at once, but will do so gradually, as my pension has not yet been paid. I send you only twenty-five ducats through the Brother (for the poor woman is somewhat in straitened circumstances). In a short time you will receive the balance of seventy-five, which I am expecting to obtain very soon.

After the original preserved in the archives of Father General at Rome.

LETTER 866.

To Father Francesco Antonio de Paola, at Frosinone.

He rejoices to learn that the Pontifical approbation has been given to the house at Frosinone.

Live Jesus and Mary!

[About January 24, 1777.]

About six o'clock this evening, I received your letter announcing that, when the Pro-Datario proposed the approbation, it was granted. We should, therefore, humbly prostrated before our Lord, thank him for this signal favor.

I have written to Mgr. di Veroli, and have thanked him in the warmest terms; for it is he that has done all this.

I thought that the approbation would have offered more guarantees, had it come directly from the Pope; but, they tell me, that all approbations for the Romagna are given in

[1] St. Alphonsus did not wish that his Congregation should be accused of having drawn money from the kingdom of Naples; it was, it may be remembered, a thing that was strictly forbidden by the Neapolitan government. See Letter 741, vol. ii., page 507.

this manner and that they offer perfect security. As for Frosinone, the security is so much the greater as the foundation has had for itself both the previous consent of the municipality and the right of possession conferred by the bishop.

Father Blasucci will, I think, be satisfied with this approbation; for the other houses at Rome have not been approved in any other manner; this is what I am told and what Mgr. di Veroli says. We should necessarily accommodate ourselves to the usages followed in these matters.

Yes, certainly, as soon as you have been informed of the amount of the expense for expediting the Bull, write to me; I hope to send you at once the whole amount. But let me know, in what form you wish to have it. I prefer a bill of exchange; you must tell me, whether you wish to have one bill or several.

As for the claim for patronage made by the [*here a word is left out, having been torn from the original*] try to forego it; for, I should not wish to be embarrassed on this account. As for the books, I will write to Brother Michele [Ilardo].

You would like, you say, to offer a piece of linen to lawyer Buonpiani. Slowly, if you please, for I must first collect all the money necessary to pay for the Bull, in order that I may not fall short.

I have here nine *canne* [1] of linen for six shirts; it is a present destined for some one, who, however, will not make use of it. See whether these nine *canne* might not suffice for the present. In this case I would send them at once; for, in order to receive my pension, I should have to wait till the month of October, when the grain becomes ripe. Write to me about this matter.

[1] The Neapolitan *canna* is a linear measure, equal to a little more than two yards.

I intend to use my pension more to aid my brethren in the Romagna, than to aid those in the kingdom.

As the two houses of Frosinone and Scifelli are now firmly established, I should like to make that contract with Araldi,[1] about which you know. The rent is undoubtedly much higher than the revenue; we must consider whether, in the course of time, the land may be made to procure for us a larger income. Hence, if really there would be no hope of securing in time any great gain, why should we make a contract that would oblige us every year to make up the loss with our own money? This is just what Father Blasucci has written to me.

Examine well this matter, so that I may make arrangements accordingly.

I bless you, my dear Father, and remain . . .

BROTHER ALFONSO MARIA.

After the original preserved in the archives of Father General at Rome.

LETTER 867.

To the Same.

Happy news concerning the Congregation.—Affairs at Scifelli.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

NOCERA, January 28, 1777.

This morning I received your letter of January 20, with a copy of the petition. According to what you tell me, the Bull of approbation is nearly drawn up.

I now expect a copy of this Bull and the bill of expenses; I will send at once the needed amount.

I have not yet been able to draw the rest of my pension;

[1] The Araldi family belonged to Veroli; Abate Arnauld and, later on, Father Landi bought from it various tracts of land.

but do not be disturbed, as I will find the means of sending you all the money that is required. In the meantime, I am continually occupied in thanking Jesus and Mary for the precious favors that they are granting me during the last days of my life.

I have had the fever during four days in consequence of catarrh of the chest; but I am better, and the fever has left me.

The news from Naples in reference to the Sarnelli lawsuit is also good. We had offered a new petition, and according to our wish, the case has been sent back [from the Junta of Abuses] to the royal Chamber.[1] Things have now changed. May Jesus and Mary be forever blessed!

When Father Blasucci returns, tell him that I have given orders to Father Caione to return the hundred ducats given to him by that woman. I have begun to pay them; but remember that we are no longer charged with saying Masses in honor of St. Lucy.

Don Francesco Massoni has written to me. He has found the two bills amounting to about three hundred ducats, which we are to pay to Signor Bisleti for expenses connected with the little forest at S. Cecilia [Scifelli]. In the month of October, when I draw my pension, I intend to pay off those three hundred ducats.

As regards the lands of Araldi, I ask you once more to tell me what revenues they produce. According to what your Fathers first told me, they produce annually twenty-two ducats;[2] but Father Blasucci afterwards wrote to me that the annual rent exceeded the income; in his opinion these lands could not yield more. Fathers Cimino and Villani, however, tell me that the contract would always be useful, and I am inclined to make it.

[1] A favorable rescript was, in fact, issued on the 7th of the following March.

[2] 93.50 frs.

I beg you, therefore, to obtain exact information about all the circumstances, so that when the time comes, I may be able to arrange matters. Do not, however, let it be known that this contract is my work or the work of any one of us.

Now, I must ask your advice on another point; since such a contract would be useful, I would like you to tell me how it is to be made without incurring the displeasure of Father Blasucci, who is opposed to it. Here is another point. Campanaro has consented that the debt contracted may be gradually cancelled by paying fifty ducats every year; this appears to me to be very advantageous. Yet, when you have obtained information also on this point, send it to me, and do not let Father Blasucci see that you are actively engaged in this matter.

As to the house at Girgenti, I have learned that the Consultors at Palermo had made a statement in favor of Campofranco; but the Archbishop of Palermo, to whom I have written, answered me that this news was false.

I should very much like to have Father Blasucci make a careful inquiry about this affair.

Father Maione, at Naples, has been expecting Cardinal Branciforte for several months. He is to deliver to him a letter from me and to speak to him about Girgenti; but the Cardinal has not yet appeared in the capital. Perhaps, as the archbishop says, he will hardly go to Girgenti.

I conclude, my dear Father, by giving you my blessing.

BROTHER ALFONSO MARIA.

After an old copy.

LETTER 868.

To the Same.

Joy on the issue of the Bull of approbation for the house at Frosinone.—Measures and precautions to be taken.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

NOCERA, February 3, 1777.

The Bull has at last appeared! May God be praised!

In reference to the hundred and fifty ducats, I have sent to Father Blasucci the hundred ducats offered by Father Caione's penitent and accepted by us with the obligation, of celebrating a hundred Masses at the house at S. Cecilia [Scifelli].

Father Blasucci and I believed that we should restore the hundred ducats, in order not to incur the reproach of having drawn money from the kingdom;[1] and I hear that Father Criscuoli[2] has received this money. Have it, then, returned by the Father, for I have taken upon myself (so I have written to Father Caione) the debt of the hundred ducats, of which I have already paid a part.

As for the other fifty ducats, I send you the enclosed bill of exchange. I thought that the expense would not reach one hundred and fifty ducats, but what made it amount to so much, was, we believe, the confirmation of our privileges. Let us without ceasing thank the Lord for all the favors that he has granted us and for those that he will yet grant us.

Through the same messenger from Benevento I also send to lawyer Buonpiani the nine *canne* of linen, and the three volumes of my works on *the Heresies*. I have added a letter of thanks.

[1] This was strictly forbidden, and the Neapolitan government would have found matter for new persecution. See Letter 741, vol. ii., page 506.

[2] Father Criscuoli was Superior of the house at Scifelli.

Father Blasucci is not of opinion that we should make any purchase of Araldi; but I have written to him that in doing this we do not draw money from the kingdom; at least, it does not seem to be so. What appears to be clear, is, that we burden ourselves with the rent that Araldi was paying to Campanaro.

According to the terms of the Bull, I am told, only the house at Frosinone is approved. I should be of opinion, in order to provide for your security, that the Araldi-Campanaro contract should be made by the house at Frosinone. In this way we should not have to fear that a new bishop, by removing us from S. Cecilia, might cause us to lose our property.

Father Blasucci said that we could look upon Scifelli as a hospice of Frosinone; but this we could not do of ourselves; we should need, at least, the authority of the present bishop. Enough on this subject; this matter will regulate itself better in the future.

In the meantime I bless you and remain . . .

BROTHER ALFONSO.

[*P. S.*] I beg you to inform me of all the difficulties that may arise, and do not write so rarely.

I send you in a package some pictures and some little works on the Blessed Sacrament. They have come from Liége,[1] and I am giving a part of them to your house at Frosinone.

After the original preserved in the archives of Father General at Rome.

[1] These were sent by Canon Henri Hennequin, who thus wrote to St. Alphonsus, February 20, 1776: "I have had re-published here for the greater glory of God the *Visits* [*to the Blessed Sacrament*] and have added thereto the *Aspirations*, *Preparation for confession*, *etc.*: two thousand copies have already been printed. All this will wonderfully serve to promote the perpetual adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, practised in this immense diocese, in the whole of Flanders, and in many other provinces."

LETTER 869.

To the Same.

He rejoices at the terms in which the Bull is expressed.—Recommendations relative to a contract.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

NOCERA, February 15, 1777.

God be praised! I have received a copy of the Bull, which is very good, and the reading of it has removed from me, as well as from others, all fear that we might have touching the security of the foundation.

Among other things, I am much pleased with the clause, by which the Pope supplies all the conditions, which are requisite in the other Pontifical Bulls, and which at first frightened me; namely, the consent of the municipality, that of the neighboring monasteries, etc. Again, may God be praised!

Try to find out, and tell me afterwards, how one should set about to obtain equal stability for the house at Scifelli, at least, as a hospice of Frosinone. Please speak of this also to Buonpiani, and tell me, whether he accepted with pleasure the linen and the books that I sent him.

I have seen the bill of expenses; but you do not say whether you have received from Father Criscuoli the hundred ducats which, added to the other fifty, will serve to pay for the Bull.

As for the purchase of land from Araldi, it is useless to give me counsel in this matter; I am more persuaded than you of its necessity; but for greater security, it will be the house at Frosinone that will have to settle this affair.

Oh, how glad I was to hear that Father Blasucci has embraced your opinion! As for myself, I fear one thing (and this fear torments me), namely, that some one may take the matter out of our hands. But I have made up my

mind; I will impose upon myself every sacrifice, and even try to borrow the money, should it be at interest, in order to conclude promptly this purchase.

Tell me frankly, whether Campanaro still desires that we should buy that field, and whether he consents, when making the contract, that the eight hundred scudi belonging to him, may be paid by us in instalments of fifty scudi a year, as he had proposed.

In reference to the purchase from Araldi, tell me whether the latter will be satisfied with the sum that he said would be sufficient.

My memory is confused, and I do not well remember what price Araldi asks of us. I am told that he first wished to have a profit of two hundred scudi, but that afterwards he was satisfied with one hundred and fifty.

Tell me what he wishes, whether one hundred and fifty scudi, or one hundred, which would be equivalent to one hundred and eighty-seven ducats and a half.[1] But it appears to me more probable that he demands one hundred scudi. Inform me of all, and begin to negotiate, but secretly and carefully, so as to conclude the contract as soon as possible. Do not, therefore, lose any time, and, before all, write to me about this affair often, say once or twice a week.

Mgr. de Sora[2] has written me a letter full of complaints. Our Fathers, he tells me, had at first promised to preach the Lenten sermons, then they left off altogether. He, therefore, desires that they should preach a few sermons at least, or give some instructions.

I have answered him that your Reverence would call upon him and would tell him all that has happened—governmental ordinances, inquiries by commissioners, in a word, all the embarrassments caused by the accusations

[1] 796.87 frs.

[2] Mgr. Giuseppe Maria Sisto y Britto, a Theatine.

made against us. I beg you, then, to visit Mgr. de Sora; we are, moreover, under obligations to him, and I regret that he is displeased. If, after having taken counsel with Father Blasucci, you could during this Lent grant to the bishop one or the other exercise, I should feel pleased; I leave everything to be decided by Father Blasucci. Tell him that I embrace him; but I do not write to him, in order not to multiply letters, and as to the affair in question, I rely entirely upon him.

Please tell me whether Father Blasucci approves of my opinion of having the purchase made from Araldi, not by the house of Scifelli, but by that of Frosinone. This manner of arranging the affair, appears to me to be the most satisfactory, and this for several reasons.

I pray your Reverence to answer me on all these matters about which I have written to you, point for point; my head feels very tired, and I may easily forget even the most important things.

I have already told you several times, that the globe made at Rome, must remain in the house at Frosinone.

I recommend to you once more the affair of Araldi; begin to discuss the clauses of the contract that is to be made with Araldi and Marquis Campanaro; but, keep the matter secret as much as possible. Recommend it also to Signor Araldi by telling him confidentially that we are accused at Naples of drawing money from the kingdom; consequently, profound secrecy must be kept, above all, in regard to the inhabitants of Veroli, who are not all our friends.

I bless you again, dear Father, and also Father Blasucci.

BROTHER ALFONSO MARIA.

After an old copy.

LETTER 870.

To Father Pietro Paolo Blasucci, at Frosinone.

He tells him to go to Naples.—Critical state of affairs of the Congregation.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

NOCERA, February 21, 1777.

Hell is making the greatest efforts to accomplish the ruin of our poor Congregation;[1] but I confide in the Precious Blood of our Lord, in the intercession of my good Mother Mary, and I hope that everything will turn out to the good of the Congregation.

As to yourself, dear Father, I ask a sacrifice of you; leave Frosinone as soon as possible and go to Naples to seek Father Maione, who will tell you all. But please do not speak to the brethren about the storm that is passing over us; they would be frightened.

As for the orders that you have left at your canonical Visitation,[2] I have received them, and, if I mistake not, I have already written to you that they were very good. I am happy to learn that they are already being observed.

In relation to the bank for grain, I am now writing to Father Criscuoli that the Fathers should, by no means, meddle with the administration of this bank. If Abate Arnauld wishes to administer it during his life-time, he is

[1] The report, of which mention was made in Letter 832, had just appeared on February 13, after a delay of nearly three years. The Fiscal Procurator Ferdinando di Leon tried to prove in the report that our houses were *illicit bodies;* that the acquisitions made by us, especially owing to the donation of the priest Don Andrea Sarnelli, were *manifest injustices;* that the doctrine of St. Alphonsus was a *pernicious doctrine;* consequently he demanded the abolition of our Institute.—See Tannoia, bk. iv., ch. xi.

[2] Father Blasucci had made the canonical Visitation of the houses of Scifelli and Frosinone.

free to do so; but the Fathers should not interfere. I also send, in compliance with your wish, the ordinances that you have made.

I beg you again to set out as soon as you can, for there is danger in delay [*periculum est in mora*]. I bless you and hope soon to hear of your arrival at Naples.

BROTHER ALFONSO MARIA.

After the original preserved in the archives of Father General at Rome.

LETTER 871.

To Father Francesco Antonio de Paola, at Frosinone.

Various orders concerning the contracts relative to the house at Scifelli.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

[NOCERA, February 21, 1777.]

Father Blasucci having to go to Naples on account of an affair that is of great importance to the Congregation, you will, please, dear Father, follow in his absence the instructions that he has left. Take, then, in a secret way the necessary measures through Father Criscuoli to learn from a stranger, who understands such things, the value of the lands and the amount of their income. We could then compare their report with the price that we would have to pay to Signor Campanaro.

In the meanwhile, endeavor to conclude the affair and the contract with Araldi and Campanaro, and even draw up a sketch of the agreement that will have to be stipulated; but keep everything a profound secret.

Father Blasucci is right. It would, therefore, be well that in the agreement, that is to be made with Campanaro, the concession granted by the latter should be mentioned; namely, that the capital may be gradually paid by an

annual payment of fifty scudi *derived from money drawn from the Pontifical State.*

Father Blasucci also asks that the contract should be made by the house at Scifelli, as the land in question adjoins the garden. To this I give my consent.

Be then so kind, dear Father, as to go to Scifelli to plan together with the other Fathers of this house the conditions of the contract. Go afterwards to Veroli, to settle the matter with Araldi and Campanaro, and say a word about all this to Monsignor.

I beg you, before all, to write to me often. I bless you.

BROTHER ALFONSO MARIA.

After the original preserved in the archives of Father General at Rome.

LETTER 872.

To Cardinal Antonio Branciforte, Bishop of Girgenti, at Naples.

He begs him to protect the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer.—Short apology for his Moral Theology.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

[NOCERA, February 21, 1777.]

. . . . . Your Eminence could easily obtain for us this favor [1] from the Marquis,[2] if it can be called a favor and not a matter of justice. I firmly hope that you will obtain it for us, before a different course is assigned to the report; for this might be the total ruin of our poor Congregation.

From what I hear, this report is entirely against us. Among other things in it, it is said that my Moral Theology is conformable to the doctrine of the Jesuits, that I hold

[1] The returning of the case to the royal Chamber, and the avoiding of the Junta of Abuses.

[2] Marquis della Sambuca.

opinions contrary to the good of the State and contrary to the Gospel.

My Moral Theology has been approved at Naples by both authorities; it has been reprinted six times, and at Rome, in Spain, in Germany, and also in France, it has met with a favorable reception.

If I well understand the rumors, that are afloat, the king, our Master, is asked, that in view of the errors, with which this Moral Theology is infected, the members of our Congregation should be forbidden to hear confessions and to preach, as long as my book has not been examined.

In this case, all my brethren, either at Naples, or at Girgenti, would be reduced to total inactivity.

Tannoia, Book iv., Chapter viii.

LETTER 873.

To Father Francesco Antonio de Paola, at Frosinone.

He complains of his silence.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

NOCERA, March 7, 1777.

I have been expecting an answer for two or three weeks from you, and I have not yet received any.

I had written to you that I had called Father Blasucci to Naples about a matter that greatly concerns the Congregation. Father Maione had, in fact, come expressly from the capital to beg me to send Father Blasucci.

I wrote at once to the latter; I wrote also to you, dear Father; but I have received no answer, either from him or from you, and I do not know what has happened at Naples. This makes me fear that my letter may have found you ill. Please tell me what is the matter, and answer also about all the points of which I have spoken to you concerning the Araldi affair.

I conclude, for I do not know where to make myself

heard, and I have already given you many details touching other affairs.

In view of the numerous negotiations, in which we are at present engaged, especially in that of Araldi (which I should not like to see escaping us through our fault), I had asked you to write to me often, at least once a week; but you have done just the contrary.

Please let me know, if any disturbance has occurred. I have nothing else to write to you, and I finish by saluting you, Reverend Father, all your companions and Father Blasucci, if he is still with you.

BROTHER ALFONSO MARIA.

After the original preserved in the archives of Father General at Rome.

LETTER 874.

To Father Angelo Maione.

Joy at the favorable sentence rendered at Naples in behalf of the Congregation.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

[NOCERA, about March 9, 1777.]

Benedictus Dominus Deus Israel, qui facit mirabilia solus! [Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel, who alone doth wonderful things.—*Ps.* lxxi. 18.]

I received the two letters, which prove a double miracle.[1] Indeed a double miracle, for Marquis della Sambuca had based his decree on the gravity of the circumstances, and his preamble does not, it seems to me, aim at the

[1] One of these miracles was the decree, by which the king of Naples ordained on March 7th, that the process should again be referred to the royal Chamber, and that the report of the fiscal lawyer should there be examined. Thus vanished in a great measure the fear of seeing the Congregation suppressed.

Romagna, for everything is quiet in that country. I believe rather that there is question of Sicily and of Campofranco; it is the effect of representations made by some minister of Palermo. At present the affair is of no importance; but try to discover, if there is any affair pending in the Romagna, in order that we may be on our guard.

If Mgr. Rossi has had his case fixed for the 12th, he will probably solicit a decree that it may be taken up also on the 18th; in the meantime there is no news from Roberto.[1]

Would to God that the consultation had taken place on the 22d! Even though there might have been question of having our cause judged by the Junta of Abuses, the evil will be much less than if judged after the consultation.

Be, however, on the loookout; for the Baron [Sarnelli] will not fail to have recourse to another trick.

If Father Leggio is with you, or if he comes to you, tell him that after the 15th he may go to Frosinone with the conveyance that Father Blasucci will take to return in; so Father Blasucci has written.

I will apply three Masses for the cause, and I have already said one of them.

Give thanks, in my name, to Celano and Vivenzio; congratulate them on the energy with which they opposed the returning of our case to the Junta of Abuses.

I bless you and remain . . .

BROTHER ALFONSO MARIA.

After the original in possession of Cavaliere Giancarlo Rossi at Rome.

1 As we have said, Mgr. Rossi could not take possession of the See of Sant' Agata, till after several years, and during this interval Canon Roberto was charged with the duty of paying the pension due to St. Alphonsus.

LETTER 875.

To Father Francesco Antonio de Paola, at Frosinone.

How he should conduct a negotiation.—Falsity of the rumors intentionally spread by the adversaries of the Congregation.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

NOCERA, March 21, 1777.

I received your letter on the 8th of March.

The Signori Araldi [1] seem to be joking. After having, with so much difficulty, lowered their price to seven hundred ducats, now, by mutual consent, they raise it to eight hundred! You are right; we must now expect them to come to us, and not show that we are running after them.

It is, of course, understood that, should they make a new proposition, we should accept it at once; but you must only say that you wish to speak to me; we shall then see what course to pursue.

Let us keep ourselves united with God; if God does not wish this contract, neither do we wish it. To agree to pay eight hundred scudi, is nothing less than to engage ourselves to pay thirty-two ducats of annual rent, while the land hardly yields twenty-two. In other words, we should oblige ourselves to pay ten ducats every year above our income.

But, you will say that it may happen that others will take the land.—Let them take it! It will, however, be difficult for others to make this contract with such a loss, the more so, since no proprietor owns any lands near this piece of ground. But, I hope that four or five months will not pass by before the Signori Araldi will desire to renew the negotiations, as Campanaro wishes to be paid.

Write me, then, about everything that may happen in regard to this affair, and then leave all to God!

[1] Canon Vincenzo Araldi and his brother Alessandro.

We should, it seems to me, finish the payment of the Bull. Be without solicitude. Father Blasucci, I hope, has arrived at Naples, or he will be there in a few days. For the present I have but little money; the month of October, however, will bring me my two half-yearly payments, when the grain has been sold.

Moreover, I expect to see Father Blasucci, and I will speak to him about the sum that I am to send you. Meanwhile, try to get out of the difficulties as well as you can.

The decree of our suppression is a falsehood, that Sarnelli has spread among the people. Tell every one that this news is a real lie, and that our affairs have taken a favorable turn, since the report of Commissioner de Leone, which was hostile to us, has been referred to the Chamber.

The strongest objection of the report is directed against my Moral Theology; but I have composed a long treatise, [1] in which I reply clearly to all the false opinions, that have been imputed to me. Tell me, what Father Blasucci is doing; I have learned that he is not yet at Naples.

I bless you, my dear Father, and remain . . .

BROTHER ALFONSO MARIA.

After an old copy.

LETTER 876.

To the Same.

Various topics.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

NOCERA, March 27, 1777.

Yes, I have received the letter that you have written to me concerning the Araldi and Ciceroni affair, especially concerning the Araldis.

[1] As this treatise is a publication of Moral Theology, it will be found in the *Special Correspondence*.

If anything new occurs, please inform me of it immediately. It is, moreover, not our business to go in search of those gentlemen; let them come and knock at our door.

I expected that Father Blasucci would come to see me after leaving Naples; I would have arranged with him the sum that I was to send you to complete the payment of the Bull and to give you some assistance towards your support. But he has written to me that he will come only after a few days. In the meantime provide for your wants in the best way you can.

I wish also to send some relief to the house at Scifelli, where I hear there is distress. But, till the month of October, I shall be without resources; it is only in October that I shall be able to touch my pension.

I had asked you to write to me by every post concerning the Araldi affair; but, as now everything is quiet, there will be no need of doing so; write to me, however, should it become necessary.

As for the disagreement, of which you speak, I do not remember having written anything of the kind.

Father Blasucci is working at the memorial, which will be read in the course of the process, that is, very soon. For this occasion I have also been obliged to compose several pages for printing. It is a real miracle that I have not had a stroke of apoplexy.

I bless you, dear Father, and all your subjects.

BROTHER ALFONSO MARIA.

After an old copy.

LETTER 877.

To Father Angelo Maione, at Naples.

Recommendations relative to the process which is to be pleaded.—Good effect that episcopal letters would produce.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

NOCERA, April 5, 1777.

I have received your note; it contains nothing important.

I insist once again that you try to finish, as soon as possible; slowness can do us great harm.

As for knowing, what is slowness and what is not, consult Celano and Vivenzio.

If we wished to answer in writing all the objections that might be made against us by our adversaries or by the ministers, we should surely need several months. Let us, therefore, wait till they make objections and, for the present, content ourselves with answering the principal things.

I bless you all and remain . . .

BROTHER ALFONSO MARIA.

[*P. S.*] Speak of all this particularly to Vivenzio.

Yes, of course, you may meanwhile let Celano read my writing; show it also to Vivenzio.

I have always believed that it would be of great advantage to us, if letters were addressed to the king by all the bishops, in whose dioceses we have given missions. A single petition, signed by all these prelates, would be, in my opinion, less useful than the many letters written by the bishops individually; for each one in his letter would give the king some information of the good done in his diocese.

Of course, these petitions should arrive at an opportune time. We must wait for the moment when the consultation of the Chamber is to be submitted to the king.

At present let us, then, have patience, and see what turn affairs will take.

The bishops, it seems to me, should send these petitions to the secretariate of Marquis della Sambuca, and not to that of de Marco.

Please, dear Father, give me a little advice touching these episcopal letters. It will always be supposed, I well know, that we have solicited them; but, in my opinion, they can always be useful to us, if only, to show how many bishops take our work under their protection.

After the original preserved in the archives of Father General at Rome.

LETTER 878.

To Don Vincenzo di Maio, Professor at the University of Naples.

He thanks him for having sent him a copy of ordinances of the Archbishop of Naples.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

NOCERA, April 28, 1777.

My dear Sir: I have received a copy of the excellent circular of the Archbishop [of Naples]; its compilation is, no doubt, due to our worthy Canon Simioli, to whom I beg you to give my kind regards. I am extremely obliged to you for having sent it to me.

I have learned with joy that the Archbishop has again directed the religious to give catechism; but I fear that they will soon give up what they have begun.

I have already sent to the printer the little work, the revision of which was intrusted to you.[1]

[1] The little work bears the title: "Fidelity of Subjects to God renders them Faithful to the Prince, their Ruler." The report

I again recommend myself to your prayers, and I beg you to believe me always,

Your very devoted and grateful servant,

ALFONSO MARIA DE LIGUORI, *Bishop.*

After an old copy.

LETTER 879.

To the Members of the Congregation, called the Chinese Congregation, at Naples.

Attestation relative to the holy life of Don Matteo Ripa, Founder of said Congregation.

[May 24, 1777.]

I, the undersigned, Alfonso Maria de Liguori, Rector Major of the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer, formerly Bishop of Sant' Agata de' Goti, make the following declaration. I have been requested to furnish some information regarding the life and the virtues of Don Matteo

of the examiner, appointed by the Archbishop of Naples, was couched in the following terms:

"Most Reverend Sir: One of the most illustrious bishops, as renowned for his piety as for his science, Mgr. Alfonso de Liguori, has wished still to add to the immense labors, in which he has spent his life for the service of the Church of God. Notwithstanding the infirmities, that weigh upon him, and listening only to the zeal, with which he is inflamed in his extreme old age, he has composed a little work, entitled: 'Fidelity of Subjects to God renders them Faithful to the Prince, their Ruler.' By your order I have read this little work, and, without speaking of the pleasure that it afforded me, I have seen in it only that which serves the cause of faith and morals. I am, therefore, of opinion that it should be printed, if it so pleases your Grace.

I have the honor to be,

Your Grace's,

Most humble, devoted, and obedient servant,

VINCENZO DI MAIO,

NAPLES, June 23, 1777. *Professor of Theology.*

Ripa, secular priest of the territory of Eboli (Province of Salerno), who founded at Naples the Congregation and the College of the Holy Family, commonly called the Chinese College. But I am too advanced in age, and I do not remember the particular details, that would enable me to speak in praise of this illustrious apostle of the Gospel.[1]

Nevertheless, for the greater glory of God, for the edification of the Christian people, and in praise of Don Matteo Ripa, I certify and attest, and, if need be, take an oath, as priests are accustomed to take, that I have lived some years in his Congregation in the quality of a pensioner, and this at the very time when he had just founded it. Later, I frequently had personal relations with him. Now, all these circumstances left the impression upon me that Don Matteo Ripa united in himself a rare combination of Christian virtues.

In fact, who can tell how much fatigue, how many sufferings and expenses the long and perilous voyage to China cost him, and the long stay of several years that he made in that country, where, with an indefatigable zeal he procured the conversion of souls, the propagation of the Catholic faith, and the progress of good morals! What an important and difficult enterprise did he accomplish, when he brought to Europe, and even to Naples, some young Chinese from the remotest part of Asia! With them he began, with them he finished the foundation, of which I have spoken, and he did this at the cost of long and numerous journeys, either to Vienna or to Rome, in spite of a thousand dangers, a thousand obstacles that hell raised against him. These obstacles God permitted, in order to show to the whole world, that the aforesaid work was truly his work, and also to enable Don Matteo Ripa, a man

[1] Father Matteo Ripa died March 29, 1746, at the age of sixty-four.

chosen by him for so great a design, to practise the Christian virtues.

Father Ripa understood this so well, that contradictions could never discourage him. Moreover, when, according to human prudence, everything was lost, that was sufficient to confirm him the more in his confidence in God; soon, in fact, he saw his affairs revived, saw them re-established and successfully completed.

In connection with this matter, I remember that one day he solicited aid from a lady, whose name I do not recall to mind. He had asked her to intercede with a prominent person of Naples, that he might favor the foundation of the Chinese Congregation and College. This lady, having informed him, that she had not been able to succeed, Matteo Ripa at once exclaimed: *The foundation is from this time forward assured!* In fact, things then began to take a more favorable turn.

One thing, moreover, sufficiently testifies in his favor: it is to have undertaken the conversion of the immense Chinese empire, a work so important and so difficult; to have founded for this purpose a Congregation and a College, in which Chinese might receive the necessary instruction to go afterwards to convert the unbelievers of that country. This work, by itself, proves how praiseworthy is the priest, who founded and sustained it at the price of so much labor. God has, therefore, visibly blessed this Congregation; the Sovereign Pontiff and the king of Naples have favored it; many good priests have been enrolled in its ranks, and it has developed since by means of worthy Chinese missionaries, of whom it has sent a great number to all parts of China. These excellent labors have, in fact, by the grace of God, brought about a multitude of conversions; they continue, in spite of persecutions, to evangelize their country, and the annual letters from China

attest the great number of souls that they daily bring to the Catholic faith.

In testimony whereof, etc.

NOCERA DE' PAGANI, May 24, 1777.

I, ALFONSO MARIA DE LIGUORI, attest as above.

BRO. FRANCESCO ANTONIO ROMITO, *Secretary.*

After an old copy.

LETTER 880.

To Signora Anna Cassanova, at Frosinone.

He thanks her for the services rendered to the Fathers at Frosinone.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

[PAGANI, May 30, 1777.]

My dear Madam: I have heard through Father Costanzo of the continual services that you with your sisters have been rendering to my Fathers, since their establishment at Frosinone. I thank you most sincerely, and, not being able to do more, I will ask our Lord to reward you for your charity.

Please to recommend me to our Lord, that he may grant me a good death; and receive the expression of profound respect, with which I have the honor to be, my dear Madam,

Your very humble servant,

ALFONSO MARIA DE LIGUORI, *Bishop.*

After the original, preserved at Alvito, in the Persichetti family.

LETTER 881.

To Father Angelo Maione, at Naples.

The taking possession of a foundation at Benevento.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

NOCERA, June 9, 1777.

Thank God! on the 5th of the present month, our Fathers took possession of their house in the city of Benevento.[1]

They afterwards visited the associations of secular priests, and everywhere they were received with marks of affection.

On Friday evening they began to live in the house, and on Sunday they began their labors in the church; in the morning they heard confessions, and after dinner they gave a catechetical instruction and preached the sermon on a good death.

Thank God! there is not a shadow of opposition; let us be thankful to our Lord.

The sign for silence has already been given, and I am still writing to you; yet I believe that I should remind you of our duty to thank God.

As soon as you hear any good news concerning the date of the process, write to me. The Cardinal has seen Madam Patrizio and has warmly spoken in our favor; he afterwards wrote to the counsellor himself.

I bless you and remain . . .

BROTHER ALFONSO MARIA.

After the original preserved in the archives of Father General at Rome.

1 This house had belonged to the Society of Jesus. When the Society was re-established, the house was restored to the former owners.

LETTER 882.

To Father Gasparo Caione, Rector of the New House at Benevento.

Joy afforded him by the foundation of the house at Benevento.—Advice as to the way of acting at such beginnings.—Onerous clause that should be removed in the contract of the foundation.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

NOCERA, June 10, 1777.

I have gathered all desirable information, my dear Father, and I am quite pleased, especially in seeing with what wisdom you have behaved in this whole negotiation. I have particularly admired the affection, that the Cardinal has shown us, and the rare prudence, with which he directed our way of proceedings; as, our visits to the Communities, to the nuns, to the gentlemen. I would not have thought of any better way. In a word, the Cardinal has acted, as if he were one of us.

What I have just told you of his Eminence, tell him confidentially; for I will not write, for fear of importuning him, but I pray God to reward him for his goodness towards us.

Instruct all your companions, to show themselves extremely courteous, to salute every one, especially priests and gentlemen; to receive with affability and to listen leisurely to all those that call upon them; finally, to visit those gentlemen that visit them; I mean those of a somewhat better social standing.

Signor Musto, I am told, is a sort of father to my family. When an occasion offers itself, you may tell him that I feel myself honored; but do this without affectation.

The Cardinal is right: we should not go to see the nuns, except when their Superiors call for us. If a particular nun desires our service, let us ask the Cardinal's permission; but it would be better that the nun should herself procure the permission. We should, moreover, carefully observe our Rule, and not accept the office of director of nuns. It is one thing to give advice in a particular case, another thing to direct.

Be extremely courteous towards priests and religious, especially towards those that visit you.

We should return the visits of the Superiors.

Let us not become familiar with any religious; let us keep to the requirements of a cordial politeness. Let us, moreover, love silence.

As for the Cardinal, we should go to see him when necessary, but not too often. Frequent visits would annoy his Eminence and inspire others with jealousy.

Tell all this, my dear Father, to your companions.

My letter had been written when I learned with very great pain that, according to the contract of the foundation, we are obliged continually to maintain six Fathers at home. I believed that we were to furnish simply four confessors, as I had so decided and Father Andrea had so written to me. This morning I learn, that it was settled to have six Fathers, and that this clause has been inserted in the contract. For this reason I am plunged into affliction; for, how remedy the evil, since there is question of an engagement made under oath? My joy, therefore, of the first moment has been singularly troubled. Four Fathers continually on duty would be enough even for the archdiocese of Naples. The misfortune is, that the engagement has been made. However, it is against my consent, and I am sure, that if I had been notified in time to address

my humble and cordial representations to the Cardinal, his Eminence would have demanded only four Fathers.

I conclude by asking our Lord to grant us his assistance that we may do our duty.

I bless you, Reverend Father, and all your companions.

BROTHER ALFONSO MARIA.

[*P. S.*] I was going to send you this letter, written by fits and starts; but, on reflection, I find that I cannot accept a contract that causes me so many scruples.

Read the enclosed letter addressed to the Cardinal; you will see therein [*here two words are wanting*] that I refuse for the present to accept the foundation; and I am not bound by it, since I never gave my consent for more than four Fathers. It is sufficient, if we have there four of our Fathers to attend to the work of the confessional; it is not necessary that they be irremovable, that is, always the same ones.

As for the exercises to be held in our church, here is what I think. The catechism, the little chaplet, very well. Two Congregations, very well again. Retreat to the faithful every year, very well; but the Cardinal adds: Retreats to the clergy, to gentlemen and to merchants. Was it not sufficient to say: retreat to the clergy (which, moreover, would be time lost) and retreat to the rest, that is, to the faithful? Let that, however, pass. But to wish to have six permanent subjects, who are to be retained as slaves, and quite uselessly; for outside of the time of the feasts, who will go to confession, except some devout person? Six permanent Fathers! But, if one of them is taken ill, another must visit his family, another is called away for some other reasons, could none of them leave? All manner of scruples will fall upon me; for the subjects in their necessities will ask of me the required permission, and I could not replace them. What! have I not already

enough disquietude of conscience? Are people anxious to plunge me into a hell of scruples during the last days of my life?

For charity's sake, beg the Cardinal to have pity on me and on my brethren; for I see that engagements so onerous, even if subscribed to, cannot be kept.

Tell the Cardinal, moreover, not to be disquieted, the house will never be wanting confessors. Only it may sometimes happen that the exact number of six will not be present. Four permanent confessors suffice to hear the confessions of the whole diocese.

I do not expect an immediate answer from the Cardinal. Give him time to reflect, and on your part make every effort to spare me so many scruples. It will be well for you to go several times to renew your entreaties with the Cardinal. Then, when the latter has come to a definite conclusion, send me his answer by a messenger.

I admit, that the contract is made; but the Cardinal can modify it, if he wishes, since the Pope has left the settlement of the conditions entirely in his hands.

For pity's sake, my dear Father Gasparo, free me from all these scruples. If things remain as they are, I should feel too unhappy the rest of my days.

After the original preserved in the archives of Father General at Rome.

LETTER 883.

To the Same.

Instructions as to the examination of confessors and to the religious exercises that should be performed in the house at Benevento.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

NOCERA, June 29, 1777.

I answer you, my dear Father Gasparo, with a troubled mind, on account of our lawsuit at Naples. The case had, in fact, been set down for Thursday the 3d, but Paoletti said that he had a catarrh and could not make his report. That upset me entirely, and I wrote to Paoletti, to beg him to render his service; for, if Thursday passes by, and the case is not argued, God knows when it will be.

During these days the Fathers and I are applying Masses for this intention; you and your companions should, at least, offer prayers.

The Cardinal wishes, then, that our confessors should pass an examination. He is right; for, if we do not submit to any examination, how could he examine the religious of other Orders?

We ourselves, at the beginning of the Congregation, had to present ourselves for examination. It was during the time of Mgr. di Capua, Archbishop of Salerno; we were examined, Father Mazzini, Father Sportelli, and myself with them, though I was a Neapolitan confessor.

Do not, therefore, trouble yourself on this subject; the bishops are right in examining us, especially when there is a particular reason, as is the case at Benevento.

Since the Cardinal consents that you should examine in turn those of our subjects, that present themselves as confessors, first arrange with each one in particular the questions that you are going to put, and choose a question,

about which you intend to propose a distinction that is to be made or a difficulty to be solved; and all in Latin. For this purpose take the *Homo Apostolicus*, and determine in advance the points that are to be discussed before the Cardinal or the Vicar-General.[1] In this way the Cardinal will be satisfied, and we shall preserve our good reputation.

Let us now speak of the Sunday afternoon exercises. I had, at first, understood that the Cardinal wished to have merely a catechetical instruction, the recitation of the little chaplet, then exposition of the Blessed Sacrament.

But now I am of opinion, that after having given instructions for the space of half an hour, we should then preach during half an hour. In this way the faithful will at the same time be instructed in their duties and encouraged by the sermon to observe the commandments, to love God, the Blessed Virgin, etc.

I would, then, counsel you to perform the exercises in the following order (and I believe that this will also please the Cardinal). At first, catechetical instruction during half an hour; then the recitation of the little chaplet (or the *Steps of the Passion*) in the vernacular. This chaplet is found at the end of the *Practice of the Love for Jesus Christ*, page xvi.; I say *in the vernacular*, in order that the people may recite it with great devotion.

It would, however, in my opinion, be preferable to recite, instead of these *Steps*, the *little chaplet of the five wounds*, as the Jesuits do at Naples on all Fridays; this *little chaplet* is more full of acts and more devotional. It is found in the *Practice*, page xviii.

After the catechetical instruction, therefore, should be recited the *Steps of the Passion* or (what would be better) *the little*

[1] There was question, in the present case, of old Fathers, more used to the practice of the ministry, than the distinctions of the School.

chaplet of the five wounds; there would thus be an interval between the instruction and the sermon.

This *little chaplet* may be recited by the Father who gives the instruction; he should read it on his knees, after the Blessed Sacrament has been exposed; then a sermon of half an hour is preached, and the exercises should finish with the benediction of the Blessed Sacrament.

This is my opinion, or, if you wish, my plan. Please make it known to his Eminence, the Cardinal, and act afterwards in accordance with what he decides.

As for these two exercises, two Fathers are needed, one for the instruction, the other for the sermon.

If, perchance, it should happen that one of the two Fathers be wanting, the one that is charged with giving the instruction, could also give the sermon. But this would rarely be the case.

As for Signor Mansione Filomei, since the parties are divided, do what the Cardinal wishes. I have nothing else to say to you on this point.

I will send you the other works, for which you have asked me. I have but one *Council of Trent*,[1] but I will send it to you. The *Truth of Faith* and the *Glories of Mary*, had to be bought, as we have none here.

As for the novenas, I do not think that the Cardinal wishes to impose upon us the novenas of St. Francis Xavier and of St. Ignatius, which novenas, perhaps, the Jesuits used to make; for these exercises are not adapted for us. But, if the Jesuits celebrated the novena of Christmas or that of the feasts of the Blessed Virgin, we must continue them. Have an understanding about this point with the Cardinal.

I compassionate you amid the difficulties that are necessarily connected with the beginnings of a foundation; espec-

[1] This work of St. Alphonsus is entitled: *Dogmatic Work against Heretics and pretended Reformers.*

ially in this case are they unavoidable. Others still more annoying will come; write to me faithfully, therefore, in the beginning by every mail, at least by way of Benevento, and do this for three or four months. I will answer you by return mail. If there be important affairs, send me a messenger.

I am now having copied the Bull of the foundation, so that I may afterwards return the original to you. I have read it with extreme pleasure, for it shuts off every avenue to the malevolent spirits that might wish to create embarrassments for us at Rome. This has greatly consoled me, for I feared there might be some litigation.

I bless you, dear Father, your companions and all your labors. As for myself, I am staying here to disentangle the affairs of Naples, in the midst of anguish and continual cares.

Ask God that I may not end in losing my head entirely, and do not fail to begin a novena to the Blessed Virgin for the success of our lawsuit, which is to be argued immediately.

Things have, of late, taken an excellent turn; nevertheless, we must pray always, at Mass and in our meditations, for final success; but in all this let us be resigned to God's holy will.

BROTHER ALFONSO MARIA.

After the original preserved in the archives of Father General at Rome.

LETTER 884.

To Father Giovanni Battista di Costanzo,[1] at Frosinone.

He recommends to him fraternal charity.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

NOCERA, July 7, 1777.

My dear Giovanni: Maintain at home great harmony, and I recommend it to you as much as I can.[2] When you

1 This Father was born on April 20, 1743, at Cassamicciola in the island of Ischia. Admitted to profession on May 15, 1760, he had later the consolation of being a witness at the process of beatification of St. Alphonsus. He died in the house at Pagani, October 20, 1801.

2 The saint, it seems, believed that disagreements had arisen between Father de Paola and Father Costanzo. This is, at least, what may be gathered from a letter addressed to the saint by Father Blasucci on July 15, of the year 1777, and expressed in the following words: "Your Lordship writes to me that Father Lauria has come here to recover his health and then to return to Girgenti, and nothing more. On the other hand, I learn through another channel that the inhabitants of Girgenti, having pressed your Lordship to send me back to them, you promised Signor Cantore to send me back to that city, next September. This news was communicated to Fathers de Paola and di Costanzo, and they assured me that it was true. Supposing this to be true, I would make known to you in all simplicity my views in the interest of this new foundation at Frosinone. If my departure for Sicily is brought about, there is, in my opinion, no one, except Father de Paola, who can be appointed Rector of this house, and Father Costanzo should be his Minister. These two subjects were the first in this foundation; they take great interest in it and are desirous of making it prosper; for this they have, moreover, the desired ability and influence, and all the inhabitants of Frosinone, above all, those of the respectable class, hold them in high esteem. I speak the truth when I say that, whatever has been done at Rome, either for the Bulls and the process, or for the building of the house, they have done it, and they have done it well. As for myself, I have been merely a spectator, and I should be so yet, if I continued

see that things do not go according to your liking, it will be better to yield; temporal interests might thereby suffer a little, but this would be better than to violate charity to the spiritual detriment of the Community.

I am, at present, reading the Life of St. Ignatius; he very severely punished those that troubled the peace of the house and wounded charity.

I know that you love the Congregation; if, then, you love it, love peace. And I repeat: in important matters write to me; I hope, with God's help, to remedy everything. Know also that I love and esteem you.

I bless you.

After the Roman edition.

to remain here. I assure you, moreover, that during the ten months of my sojourn in this house, I have remarked nothing of the disagreements between Fathers di Costanzo and de Paola of of which people have spoken; on the contrary, I have seen peace, union, and fraternal charity reign between them. Neither Father di Costanzo, nor Father de Paola adheres obstinately to his opinions; and, if at times they differed, they both had virtue enough to sacrifice their personal views. This is the truth. I write all this, lest under the conviction that Fathers de Paola and di Costanzo do not agree with each other, you might decide upon a measure that would spoil everything. These two subjects are more than useful for this work; they are necessary for it, and should be encouraged by letters; the great efforts that they make, should be appreciated, and they should be praised for living so united; this is demanded by God himself and by justice.

"I have taken the liberty of thus manifesting my opinion; for, it is one thing to see the facts, another to hear people, who speak and write by exaggerating the details. As for myself, before seeing things with my own eyes, I had believed the rumors that were spread about the disagreements between Fathers de Paola and di Costanzo; but I had only heard of them and not seen them. Now I believe just the contrary, and I say to you sincerely what I think before God, etc."

LETTER 885.

To Father Francesco Antonio de Paola, at Frosinone.

Solicitude of the saint for the houses of the Pontifical State.—His zeal for concord.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

[NOCERA, July 7, 1777.]

You have not written to me for some time. Write to me, then, and give me the news of your house; I take a lively interest in it.

I know that for the present you have interrupted the building of the house, to resume it in autumn.

I have written to Father Blasucci that you would do well to borrow, at least, one hundred scudi; in this way, if I send you some help, as I hope to do, the malevolent will not be able to accuse us of drawing money from the kingdom; for we shall show that the building is carried on with a sum of money borrowed at interest, or with the two hundred scudi given by the Pope. The interest on these hundred scudi must, therefore, be paid.

I have learned that Father Costanzo would like to accompany Father Blasucci to Girgenti, next September.

I have no intention, at least for the present, of sending Father Blasucci back to Sicily; much less of sending Father Costanzo. I desire that the latter should remain at Frosinone, where he is more useful than at Girgenti; for your house is a house of the Congregation, while that of Girgenti can by no means be regarded as such, since the new royal decree forbids us to have a fixed and permanent domicile in Sicily. Hence, if we should continue to live there, we should put ourselves in constant danger of being accused of infringing the decree.

I imagine that Father Costanzo may have thus spoken after having had some disagreement with your Reverence.

I beg you, dear Father, in matters in which you differ from him in opinion, to treat him with the greatest kindness; and under such circumstances refer the matter to Father Blasucci.

I desire to see perfect peace and harmony reign among you all in the house at Frosinone; let no dissensions arise, as they destroy charity. St. Ignatius regarded them with such horror that he severely chastised those that spoke or acted against this virtue.

I know perfectly your good spirit and your good will; I beg you, then, to be affable towards every one and particularly towards your brethren.

If ever I should send back Father Blasucci to Girgenti, I should willingly do what I could to replace him by Father Lauria; but for the present I have no intention of making this change.

In the meantime, I recommend to you once more what I have just written: make every effort to maintain peace. I repeat: I well know that your Reverence wishes what is most agreeable to God; continue to wish this always, above all in this house, which God has given us in a truly miraculous manner. And I repeat: write to me in your difficulties, for I hope, with the grace of Jesus Christ, to apply a remedy to all.

Our lawsuit at Naples is not finished; it may last years and years according to circumstances. I have, then, the strongest desire to preserve the houses that the Pope has given us in his States.

I expect your answer, and I bless you with all my heart. Recommend me to Jesus Christ.

BROTHER ALFONSO MARIA.

After the original preserved in the archives of Father General at Rome.

LETTER 886.

To Father Mattia Corrado.

The subjects of the Institute must not sojourn with their families without a grave reason.

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

NOCERA, July 15, 1777.

The Consultors, assembled here at Nocera, have ascertained that six of our confrères have left our houses for several months, and remain with their parents. Consequently, a letter has been written to each one, that within the space of fifteen days he must, without fail, return to the house assigned to him.

This order has been sent to all; it was written in the same terms and in the same form by Brother Francesco Antonio [Romito].

But, as I entertain great esteem for you personally, I have taken it upon myself to address to you a special letter, different from the letter that was sent to the rest. Hence, my dear Father, I do not write to you positively that you should return within fifteen days, but I beg you to let me know what necessity there is for you to remain with your parents; since, according to the Rule, the members of our Institute cannot remain with their families, except in the case of the imminent death of their father or their mother. As you are one of our old Fathers, your example does a great deal of harm by encouraging others to remain with their parents.

We have different houses; if the air of one house does not agree with a subject, he is assigned to another house.

I have written all this to let you understand the esteem and the affection that I bear towards you. I do not, then, fix for you the term of fifteen days; but I beseech you, at least, to write to me what is the cause that keeps you with

your family. I shall try to use towards you all possible indulgence, provided it be a reasonable indulgence, for I must myself render an account of this to others.

I have been thinking for a long time to ask you to come to live with me at Nocera; for, as Superior I am in the midst of a thousand and one difficulties, and I have been continually thinking of taking counsel with a prudent man. I was going to send for you, when I learned that you had been living with your family for some time.

I beg you to answer me and to console me by your answer. I bless you.

After the Roman edition.

LETTER 887.

To a Nun.

He gives her news of his health and promises her a book of devotion.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

NOCERA, July 15, 1777.

I have received your letter. Here is my answer. I am now almost eighty-one years of age.

My infirmities oblige me to remain continually in an arm-chair; I am a cripple and, consequently, near death; therefore, I stand in greater need of your prayers than you of mine. I will, however, recommend to our Lord all the intentions that you have marked down in your letter.

Through our Fathers, who are at N., I will send you a book of my own composition; it treats of divine love; it is good for souls tormented by troubles of conscience. Read it, and give it also to other Sisters to read, who are a prey to desolation.

Earnestly recommend me to our Lord, for my death is not far off. I bless you in the Heart of Jesus.

Your very humble servant,

ALFONSO MARIA, *Bishop.*

After an old copy.

LETTER 888.

To Father Gasparo Caione, at Benevento.

Recommendations relative to pious exercises.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

NOCERA, July 20, 1777.

When a favorable opportunity presents itself, I wish you would mention to the Cardinal what I wrote to you, I think, on a former occasion. It is this. In order to satisfy the good people and draw them to the church, as well as for the glory of God, it would be well to introduce after the instruction some pious exercise, for example *the chaplet of the five wounds*, and then allow the half-hour's sermon to follow. The people are not content with mere instruction. After having been taught the law of God, they usually desire to be brought by means of prayer to love it, and indeed [1] . . . . . told me that the women complain bitterly of this want: "Alas, these . . . . . are not at all like . . . . . who never preach . . . . . ."

Tell these things to the Cardinal from me; he will not refuse to accede to this request, for he is a zealous man.

I remain

BROTHER ALFONSO MARIA.

[*P. S.*] Send some one to the Fathers at Sant' Angelo to tell them that I want them to copy the last Bull concerning the house at Benevento, and to send it to me at once.

[1] The omissions show where the original is illegible.

When I forwarded the document to them I subjoined the like command, but the copy has not been forthcoming.

After the original in possession of Rev. Father Bridgett, C. SS. R.

LETTER 889.

To a Nun.

He asks her to impart for him some words of encouragement to a sick nun.

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

[NOCERA], July 20, 1777.

I am not sorry that Sister N. is sick; for I wish that my penitents should leave this earth very soon, in order that they may be united with Jesus Christ.

I know how much she has been persecuted. Please to tell her for me that she should at present do nothing but conform to the will of God in all her sufferings; that she should have great confidence in the blood of Jesus Christ; and that she should be without fear; for I give her the assurance that our Lord is full of benevolence towards her.

I will even say that this illness is a special favor from her heavenly Spouse. Let her only try to unite all her sufferings to those of Jesus Christ.

I beg her to recommend me to the Lord; for I have been feeling very ill this morning.

After the Roman edition.

LETTER 890.

To Father Francesco Antonio de Paola, at Frosinone.

He gives him a gentle reproof for having mistaken his sentiments.—Details relative to the interests of the house at Frosinone.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

[NOCERA, July 1777.]

I have received your letter of July 16.

I have, on the one hand, seen with pleasure that, far from having had any disagreement with Father Costanzo, you have acted in concert with him. On the other hand, I have read with pain a certain phrase that I did not expect of your resignation and your well-known love of obedience. *I am resolved*, you tell me, *to return to the kingdom.*

I can only pity you. The profound trouble, in which you were plunged, alone explains those words, and I hope that you have already repented of having written them; for such words, such thoughts have certainly not been pleasing to God.

It is not my letter that could have dictated to you such an outburst, for I wrote it with all the affection that I have always borne you.

One might have thought, that you were of a gloomy disposition, from what you wrote to Father Villani; but the good spirit, with which you are animated, should have made you accept this mortification without trouble, the more so, since you know perfectly well how much Father Villani loves and esteems you.

Father Villani, moreover, has before now administered the same reproof to myself; but, thank God, I tranquilly accepted it, and drew profit from it by being humble and moderate on these occasions.

Think, therefore, no more of my letter, nor of that of

Father Andrea [Villani]; even destroy his letter and continue to live in peace with Father Costanzo and with the others. And when Father Costanzo, or another Father, should persist in wishing to have something that appears to you to be positively unreasonable, take me as your guide and write to me.

Let us now speak of other things.

I have had Father Blasucci called; for I could no longer resist the applications continually made by the inhabitants of Girgenti, without mentioning Cardinal Branciforte, who wishes to have him. This mission will be ruined, destroyed, I am sure, if Father Blasucci does not return to it. Now I wish by all means that it may not be destroyed, for there we may do much for the greater glory of God. But, if I send back Father Blasucci, I intend to send also Father Lauria.

There is, however, one difficulty: Father Blasucci writes to me that he has some stomach trouble, and I fear that his condition may grow worse in the burning climate of Girgenti.

I should, however, wish him to go to that city for the present at least, in order to prevent the ruin of our mission.

If afterwards he has to return to breathe once more the good air of Naples or of the Romagna, we shall then resolve upon doing what will best promote the glory of God. I have, therefore, asked Father Blasucci to call upon me immediately, at Nocera, in order to decide with him what is expedient, and I have told him to appoint you Superior in his absence.

Father Blasucci writes that, to cover the debts of your house and the necessary expenses at Frosinone, you would need five hundred ducats.

For the present my purse is empty; but I hope, ere long, to receive some assistance.

I, therefore, expect Father Blasucci to consult with me as to what is to be done in regard to the building, the litigation of the church, and the money that is to be borrowed. If you absolutely need a certain sum, under the present circumstances, try to borrow it and answer me as soon as you have received my letter.

In conclusion, I beg you to settle down into a peaceful state of mind. At the beginning of foundations, annoyances, embarrassments, contradictions must necessarily be endured; but, if we perfectly resign ourselves to the will of God, he will remedy everything.

Recommend me to Jesus Christ. I bless you.

BROTHER ALFONSO MARIA.

[*P. S.*] When you see Mgr. di Veroli, give him my kindest regards; salute also for me, at Frosinone, Signor Buonpiani, Canon Vespasiani, Canon Ciceroni, and all our friends. Do not forget, when you write, to let me know, whether the two hundred scudi [1] are being collected, and how much the collection has yielded. Write to me from time to time, for I am anxious to know how you and your affairs are getting on.

After the original preserved in the archives of Father General at Rome.

LETTER 891.

To his Cousin, Antonia de Liguori, at Naples.

Solicitude of the saint for the vocation of his niece.

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

[NOCERA], July 28, 1777.

Please to salute for me my niece Teresa, and tell her that she should not allow herself to be deceived by the world,

[1] Pope Pius VI. had assigned to the house at Frosinone an annual revenue of two hundred ducats (1062 frs.) to be collected from various pious establishments in the diocese of Veroli.

and should not abandon Jesus Christ; for then she would lead an unhappy life, and would undoubtedly meet with an unhappy death.

At the present time, there are but few ladies living in the world that will save their souls.

Tell her not to give up holy Communion, and to practise mental prayer, or, at least, to read frequently some spiritual book.

I fear that she has found in the convent some girl who is worldly-minded.

I thank you for watching over her. I thought that she would by this time have asked to be a religious; but I fear that she has given up the idea.

May you yourself be forever blessed for having preferred Jesus Christ to the world! Thank God without intermission for this grace with which he has favored you—a grace that must have been very great, since it has aided you to overcome the temptation of a dowry of thirty thousand ducats.

Be always grateful to Jesus Christ, and beg him to grant me a happy death.

After an old copy.

LETTER 892.

To Father Angelo Maione, at Naples.

He excuses himself for not being able to go to Naples, and he gives his reasons.

[NOCERA, September 2, 1777.]

He that would see to what a miserable state I am now reduced, could not, I think, have the courage to require me to repair to Naples, to visit the president, the Cardinal, Sambuca, and Paoletti.

My arrival would only serve to attract a crowd of children, who would be curious to know whether the man in the carriage were dead or alive.

This is a thing that cannot be thought of, because I cannot by my presence accomplish anything. It would be better for me not to speak to the president, because he would begin to contradict me as soon as ever I began to speak. As for Sambuca, he would only occupy himself in looking at the contortion of my neck and the grotesque shape of my whole body. He would not even be able to understand me, because the weakness of my head prevents me from being able to express my thoughts clearly, and I cannot now pronounce my words properly. As to the Cardinal, I do not see what great advantage could result from my interview with him. All your thoughts are beautiful, but they are only thoughts.

I am ready to give my life for the Congregation, but not for certain useless measures.

Let us place ourselves in God's hands; he will know better than we how to defend this cause, which is more his than ours.

Tannoia, Book iv., Chapter viii.

LETTER 893.

To the Sovereign Pontiff, Pius VI.

He makes known to him the state of the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer and solicits a share in the privileges of the Passionist Fathers.

[September 12, 1777.]

Most Holy Father: Alfonso Maria de Liguori, a Neapolitan patrician, formerly Bishop of Sant' Agata de' Goti, has the honor of representing to your Holiness, that, having had, by the mercy of God, the happiness of founding in 1732, the Congregation of Missionaries of the Most Holy Redeemer, he has seen it confirmed and approved in the year 1749, by Benedict XIV., of blessed memory. This

Congregation possesses several residences or houses in the kingdom of Naples and in Sicily. In the State of Benevento it has two; one approved by the Pontiff just named, the other (the former residence of the Jesuits, who are at present suppressed), kindly bestowed by your Holiness with all its revenues. Finally, it possesses two others in the Roman Campagna. One is at Scifelli, territory of the city of Veroli. To the poor people, dispersed in the hamlets and country places, the Fathers of the said Congregation are constantly giving the spiritual help of which they stand in need. This house was founded by the present Bishop of Veroli, with the consent of Clement XIV., of happy memory. The other is established at Frosinone in the same diocese. By a special Brief of last October, your Holiness deigned to assign an annual rent of two hundred scudi to be drawn from various pious establishments of the same diocese, and in the month of February, your Holiness was pleased to approve and confirm it by a special Bull.

The members of this Congregation are strictly subject to regular observance. They lead a perfect Community-life, they make the vows of poverty, chastity and obedience, joining to these vows the vow and oath of perseverance in the Congregation. From all these vows the Sovereign Pontiff or the Superior-General can alone dispense those that have made them.

The works of the Institute are the holy missions, above all, the missions in the hamlets and country places deprived of spiritual help. There are also at different times of the year retreats given in the houses to candidates for holy Orders, to priests, and to seculars.

During more than forty years, the subjects of this Congregation have evangelized the different provinces of the kingdom, even the most remote, by giving holy missions during eight or nine months in the year. They continue to do this at present with an indefatigable zeal, and are asked

for by the bishops of all the dioceses, and this every year from the middle of October till the beginning of July. The fruit that souls derive from these labors is unspeakable, and wonderful conversions result therefrom. Hence, on every side there are continual requests for the benefit of a mission.

The houses are well provided with subjects to maintain the works of the Institute. A novitiate and a house of studies are established in due form.

The apostolic labors, so important, performed by this Congregation, induce the author of the present petition, and Founder of this Institute, humbly to solicit a favor from your Holiness. It is that your Holiness should deign to grant this Congregation a share in the privileges, faculties, favors, indulgences and offices granted to the Passionist Fathers, with the same formulas and the same clauses, as for these religious.[1]

This would be for us . . . etc.

After a copy.

LETTER 894.

To Father Francesco Antonio de Paola, at Frosinone.

He asks him for news of the two houses established in the Pontifical States.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

NOCERA, September 19, 1777.

I again recommend to you regular observance, so that no one may complain; and I again recommend peace to you.

Have they begun to draw up the details of the contract of the sale in the affair of Araldi and Campanaro? I

[1] Circumstances prevented the sending of this petition.

expect to hear the particulars, as I have already written to you.

You have only four Fathers; at Scifelli there are no more than five; I hope to send you another Father, and some pecuniary aid.

I have been ill; I had catarrh of the chest. One of these attacks will one day bring me to the grave; but, thank God, I am better.

I should like, if the Lord permits, to live till I shall be able with my pension to finish the suit in regard to the patronage of the church, and to see completed the building that has been begun. I hope that God will grant me this consolation.

Tell me how the little cells adjoining the church are progressing.

I have at present no more than ten *carlini;* but I hope shortly to receive funds from Sant' Agata.

Since you are at present involved in several affairs, that of the building, that of Araldi, that in regard to the patronage, write to me every week. I will thus know what is going on, and will, consequently, be able to take measures.

I conclude by blessing you, my dear Father, and your confrères.

Brother Alfonso Maria.

[*P. S.*] I have sent for Father Mascia from Ciorani, to prepare him for his journey to Frosinone. He is a young man, edifying and docile.

Have you been asked to give missions in the kingdom? Contrary to what I first wrote to you, I think that we can give missions there, for we are natives of the kingdom and not strangers. However, do not definitely accept any work before you have written to me on the subject, so that everything may be done with order.

After an old copy.

LETTER 895.

To the Same.

Advice as to the expenses of building, the celebration of festivals and the missions.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

NOCERA, October 5, 1777.

Let no new buildings be put up with the money that you have left, but only see that the rooms be finished so far as to be habitable; the surplus should be used only for the ordinary support.

In regard to the missions, let there be accepted neither Lenten sermons, nor Lenten exercises that may be prejudicial to the preachers; and, outside of Lent, we must not accept exercises, nor novenas, nor triduos, nor other sermons for which payment is made; but we may then receive ordinary board, yet with the express prohibition, *under formal obedience*, never to draw even a *carlino* of money from the kingdom for sermons, Masses, alms, or any other reason.

There should be undertaken no new structure, no reconstruction of the house, without the express permission of the Rector Major.

As for the church, no extraordinary expense should be incurred, without the permission of the Rector Major, for pictures, statues, chasubles or other clerical vestments, ornamented either with gold or silver. Marble altars to be erected at our expense, are also forbidden.

On the festivals of the Church we should not permit the firing of mortars, the display of fire-works, even when others wish to do so at their own expense. Elaborate decorations on the altar and ornamentation with silk and other materials are also forbidden; the altar may be adorned with garlands, with candles, and with flowers. This is

suitable for our present state of poverty; later on the new Rector Majors may think of these things.

As for the missions, I forgot the principal thing: inform me whether you have had formal requests; but accept no mission in the kingdom, even though it be but a small one, if you have not first my express permission; let me then know all by letter, and, if necessary, send me a special messenger.

Father Mascia will soon arrive. But, after what he has told me to-day, I have found that he cannot remain in the Romagna, since he has at home a mother sixty-three years old and an only sister, and no man left to look after the family. He cannot, therefore, be incorporated with the houses of the Pontifical States, since after the first alarm he would have to return.

In the meantime I send him to help at some missions that we have to give in the kingdom. I will send other Fathers to give the missions of Aquino and Sora, and you must send Father Mascia to the first that is to take place.

In November I will send several Fathers from this place, in order to prevent accusations; with these Fathers and with two or three of yours, belonging to the houses of Scifelli and Frosinone, give all the missions that you can, after having a previous understanding with Father Landi. But I repeat, do not accept any mission without having before given me information and without having my permission. You must excuse yourself to the bishops that will ask for missions, by saying, that you cannot do anything without my permission; for I am thinking of sending other Fathers from the kingdom of Naples, in order to finish these missions.

I bless your Reverence and the whole Community.

BROTHER ALFONSO MARIA.

After an old copy.

LETTER 896.

To the Same.

Particulars relative to the houses of the Pontifical States. —Reasons of the lively interest taken by the saint in these establishments.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

NOCERA, October 9, 1777.

I do not remember that I have written to Father Costanzo.

Continue to treat him with gentleness, and offer to God the little disagreements that may sometimes arise.

I send you Father Mascia together with Father Landi; but Father Mascia will not remain with you; he is merely lent to you for the missions that you are to give in the kingdom.

No one here wishes to go to the Romagna, and I cannot force any one to go, as I do not wish to be denounced to the king.[1]

I hear that in the matter of the patronage, you desire to conclude an arrangement. I am also of the opinion that it is better to come to some settlement; so is Mgr. di Veroli; but we must not give up the little piece of ground that is connected with the patronage, for there is not in that locality an inch of ground that can be bought.

One might give to the party all the money that would be required for the litigation, and even a little more; but this party should seek for an adjustment; otherwise too exorbitant pretensions might be made. Therefore, let the request come from them, and in the meantime let them know that you are disposed to stop litigation. Enough on this point; conclude nothing before you have consulted with me.

[1] The saint had been accused of making certain subjects leave the kingdom.

I expect your messenger and the terms of the Campanaro agreement concerning the Araldi property; I say the Araldi property, for Campanaro wishes to reserve to himself that of Bagnara.[1]

As for the missions, you will find all the details in the letter that Father Landi will bring you.

Tell me how many missions the Bishop of Aquino has asked for.

I desire also to know the number of the inhabitants of the hamlets that are to be evangelized; this will help me to appoint the Fathers whom I am to send from Naples, and who will take part in those missions of the kingdom.

As for the foundation at Frosinone, I now feel contented, after what you have written to me.

I am happy that Father Leggio has come back. His brother, I am told, has probably already addressed a petition to the king to oblige Father Leggio to return to his family. But, if an order of this kind is given, it will be sent to me, and we shall come to an understanding as to the measure to be taken. Meanwhile, Father Leggio would do well to beg his brother not to torment him any longer. But, if his brother continues to write to me, I will always make the same answer: Address yourself to your brother.

In regard to the building, you tell me nothing about what has been done or what you intend to do. But I learn that your debts amount to four hundred and fifty scudi, that is, more than five hundred ducats.

Would to God that I could send you my entire pension! But I am here at Nocera, in a house that possesses nothing. Finally, I am obliged to give ninety-two ducats for provisions, without counting the expenses of carriage-hire, of servants, and of what is necessary for the lawyers that come here to spend the summer.

[1] Bagnara is a small territory situated two miles from Scifelli.

Be, however, without solicitude; all that I can procure I will send to you.

I am extremely thankful to Signor Buonpiani for the many services that he renders us; offer him my sincerest thanks.

Ask his advice, how you are to pay your debts in the best possible way, with the money that I have sent you and that I will still send you, if God grants me life.

I have sent for Father Grossi. For his father has arrived here quite furious, reclaiming his son and threatening to have recourse to the king.

Ask our Lord that in the midst of all these vexations and contradictions, I may not completely lose my head.

I bless you, dear Father, and all your subjects, one by one.

BROTHER ALFONSO MARIA.

[*P. S.*] I repeat, as you have at present so many things on your hands, do not omit to write to me every week.

Do nothing in regard to the ordinations, as we must think over this matter.

You know, that I sustain the houses of the Romagna, in order to see there the Rule observed exactly. Try, then, to have our Fathers make their retreats of eight days, from now till November 10. Those who are sickly, should make at least a part of it.

Tell me at what time the missions may be begun; for, in certain places they cannot be given, either on account of the seed-time, or on account of the olives. In my opinion they can begin only towards the end of November. Excuse yourself to the bishop and tell him that you are waiting for the Fathers who are to come from Naples.

As soon as Mgr. di Veroli returns, ask him whether he wishes to have a mission; in this way he will not be offended later, when the Fathers are occupied in the kingdom.

Moreover, we can give in the kingdom only a small number of missions; for our lawsuit and the fear of being the objects of some new accusation, always create great embarrassments here. This unfortunate lawsuit at Naples gives me much uneasiness. Do not forget to recommend it to God in your holy Mass.

After an old copy.

LETTER 897.

To the Chapter at S. Pietro, at Foggia.

The saint attests the truth of the miraculous apparition that took place in this city in 1732.

[NOCERA, October 10, 1777.]

We, Alfonso Maria de Liguori, Bishop of Sant' Agata de' Goti and Rector Major of the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer, affirm and attest, even under oath, to all those that read this letter, the truth of the following fact:—

In the year 1732, we preached to the people of Foggia a series of sermons in the church of St. John the Baptist. This church then possessed a large picture, called the *old picture*, in the centre of which was an opening of an oval form and covered with a black veil. Now, on different days, and at different intervals, we saw appear outside of this covering the countenance of the Most Blessed Virgin Mary. It resembled that of a young girl of thirteen or fourteen years of age, was veiled in white, and moved from the right to the left. We were penetrated with the most tender devotion and the most intense joy; we could not even restrain our tears, when we saw that this august countenance resembled no longer a painting, but a living figure in high-relief, in flesh color, and like that of a young person who was moving from the right to the left. We were, besides, not alone in contemplating it. All the

people, assembled for the sermon, saw it also,[1] and recommended themselves with great fervor to the Blessed Mother of God, in the midst of an outburst of tears and cries.

In testimony whereof we have hereunto set our hand and seal.

Given at Nocera de Pagani, this tenth day of October, 1777.

ALFONSO MARIA DE LIGUORI, *Bishop.*
BRO. ANTONIO ROMITO, *Secretary.*

After a copy published in the process of beatification of the saint, *Positio super virtutibus, Summarium additionale n.* 2.

LETTER 898.

To Father Francesco Antonio de Paola, at Frosinone.

He gives him in all humility the reasons that induced him to remove certain subjects, and encourages him to govern well the two houses in the Pontifical States.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

NOCERA, October 12, 1777.

My dear Father Francesco: I have received your last letter, dated October 5.

The illness of Father [Deodato] Criscuoli was not feigned. This Father has had several fainting fits during this time, and one when he was here at Nocera. The doctors declare that his health is in a precarious condition, and, in fact, his color is sombre and yellow. Am I to wait till he is attacked with a fit of apoplexy? I myself was not too ready to believe his word; but the doctors must be believed. He will render but little service, the more so since he does not go on missions.

[1] On account of the large number of hearers, the pulpit had been placed at the door of the church; and, every day, when the time of the sermon had come, the picture was solemnly carried near the preacher.

As to Father Blasucci, it is not at all true that the inhabitants of Girgenti tied my hands and obliged me to yield. I simply saw that under the circumstances this mission could not continue on account of the little harmony that reigned among the subjects; and as I did not wish to destroy a house that was nearly ruined, but that could procure for God immense glory (there is here question of a diocese of one hundred and twenty thousand souls) I had to send Father Blasucci. You know, moreover, what difficulties I had in removing him from Girgenti shortly after its foundation.

God preserves my life for his glory and for the good of the Congregation. Were you, my dear Father, of opinion that we should abandon this mission? No subject of ability wishes to go to the limestone hills of Girgenti.

[At Scifelli] the Frenchman [1] could not at the beginning suffer Father Landi; but after he had intercourse with him for some time, he, thanks be to God, longed for Father Landi, and all the rest did the same, because Father Criscuoli had rendered himself so odious, that no one could bear with him any longer. If he had not departed, some unfortunate commotion might have arisen.

I beg you, my dear Father, when I make any change, not to complain before you have inquired into all the circumstances. I decide upon such measures only after a long time of reflection and consultation with those around me.

In regard to the secretary and to Mgr. [di Veroli], you will do well, one of these days, to tell them all that has passed. You must also explain to Signor Buonpiani, for whom I profess so profound a respect, the reason of the changes in question. Represent all these motives well, and my decisions will appear no longer ridiculous.

Father Grossi is good; but I did not wish to lose one of my subjects, for he is not one of those that wish to go to

[1] The Abbè Arnauld.

the Romagna. I have, moreover, told Father Landi to do nothing of himself, and to act only after having consulted the Fathers at Frosinone.

Do not, therefore, I beg you, complain any more; for, if Father Criscuoli had been maintained in his charge, the inhabitants of Scifelli would probably have caused some scandal.

One word more. Father Grossi is to go at once to Naples, as his father has rushed to this place like a real fury. "I wish to have my son," he said, "for my family is terribly tried, and we fear the ruin and the violent death of one or two of my sons." As Father Grossi did not wish to come, I had to write to him that he should come without fail; for, the father left here saying that, if his son did not come, he would address himself to the king. And if the court issues a decree, ordering all the Fathers of the Romagna to return to the kingdom, what shall we do?

Ask God to grant me the strength to bear all these trials patiently.

As regards the Masses, I told you that we must not draw any money from the kingdom, even for Mass intentions; since such an infraction might bring about our ruin; but I have not forbidden that Masses be accepted.

Remedy the difficulty as best you can. If you happen to collect a certain number of Masses (let this be confidential), and thus ten or fifteen ducats are got together, one or two bills of exchange may be bought at Naples for this sum and then sent to you; for to send bills of exchange is not to draw money from the kingdom. Give these instructions to the one that keeps an account of the Masses at Scifelli; but tell him this in confidence, in order that we may not give occasion to another accusation.

Yes, indeed, God alone can perform the miracle of sustaining houses so poor and so destitute of everything. But he will provide for them; let us take courage.

In conclusion, I must tell you that I, by no means, mistrust you; my mistrust comes from the misery in which you and I find ourselves.

Your house has been, moreover, established to put in force the Rule; and I would not like to have it destroyed. Keep this thought before your mind in your difficulties, and take measures accordingly, in the best way you can. But consider well that, as soon as you do anything imprudent in the kingdom, we shall run the risk of seeing the houses of Naples suppressed; and if the houses of Naples disappear, those of the Romagna, we may positively say, will also disappear.

All that I have just written, appears to me to be reasonable, for without mature reflection I have written nothing.

Take courage, then, and be cheerful; for, it is the work of God,—of God, in whom I have placed all my confidence, and it is he that has chosen you, my dear Father, to sustain these two houses, especially that at Frosinone, where you are.

In respect to the missions, two subjects will be with you in December. The one, Father Mascia, is already with you, but family affairs hinder him from remaining; the other will leave here, probably with Father Grossi.

I bless you, dear Father, and all your subjects.

Alfonso Maria de Liguori.

[*P. S.*] Tell Father Grossi or the other Father not to say a word to Araldi about the affair concerning the property; for, as soon as he hears us spoken of, he becomes as stubborn as a rock.

Tell Father Grossi that he is to make arrangements with Campanaro and with no one else.

After the original preserved in the archives of Father General at Rome.

LETTER 899.

To Father Gasparo Caione, Rector of the House at Benevento.

He announces to him the arrival of a lay-brother.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

NOCERA, November 6, 1777.

My dear Father Gasparo: I have learned that the health of Brother Pompilius, is not good. To replace him, I called Brother Matteo from Caposele; but, when he passed through this place, I found this Brother suffering from some trouble in his chest. I, therefore, resolved to send Brother Raffaele to be tailor at Scifelli; and Brother Matteo will remain at Benevento. The air of that place will do him good, as it is more salubrious than that of Caposele for chest troubles.

I have nothing else to say. I expect, therefore, to see Brother Raffaele here, and I bless you, dear Father, and all your subjects.

After the Roman edition.

LETTER 900.

To the Same.

Arrangements made in regard to certain Brothers.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

NOCERA, November 10, 1777.

Brother Matteo has gone to Ciorani and I have written to him to remain there for the present; later on it will be decided, whether he is to go to Scifelli, or to some other house.

After reflection I, moreover, felt some repugnance to

send him to the Romagna, for I am told that he is subject to attacks of the gout.

As to Brother Raffaele, I did not see any serious reason to let him remain longer at Benevento. Keep him, however, till you receive different orders; for, Brother Pompilius is becoming better at Scifelli; but, if he has a relapse, it will be better to send Brother Raffaele.

Let me know, when an occasion offers, whether missions are being given at Benevento, and how many. I am anxious that the Cardinal should be satisfied and that the missions, that he desires, should be given. If you should need subjects belonging to other houses, write to me, for I greatly wish to please the Cardinal.

I bless you, dear Father, and all your subjects.

BROTHER ALFONSO MARIA.

After the original preserved in the archives of Father General at Rome.

LETTER 901.

To Father Francesco Antonio de Paola.

He promises to assist him, and makes various recommendations.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

NOCERA, [November 1777].

To-day I finally received a letter from you, after waiting a long time.

You are right, and I know very well, that two hundred ducats make no more than one hundred and sixty scudi; but I have no more to give you. I have been promised a hundred ducats more by the end of this month; I will send them as soon as I receive them.

I now learn that you need fifty scudi to pay for the balance still due for the Bull. It appears to me, that Father Blasucci said thirty-five would be sufficient; now it seems

to be fifty. However, you have the account in your possession, and while there is question of paying your debts, act as seems best to you.

As for Father Landi, I had to assist him by all means, for his creditors were such as could not wait. I was obliged to give some relief to Benevento, the foundation of which has only begun. You may, moreover, believe me that in these two cases necessity alone impelled me to be open-handed.

On the subject of Araldi, I do not remember that I said the words of which you speak, nor that I gave to Father Landi full power to act freely. I have great doubts concerning the affairs of Father Landi. Please write to him that I adhere to my first instructions. In regard to the Araldi affair, he should act in concert with your Reverence. See that he writes to you all that happens, and especially in regard to the papers. But I believe that I have already told Father Landi to communicate to you all that.

With regard to the lawsuit at Naples, it is not true that things are badly arranged. Let us thank God for the turn that it has taken; but we must not be in a hurry, and this for good reasons.

You may be without solicitude on the subject of the affairs at Naples. I am most carefully watching them. You, on the other hand, are continually having sinister forebodings. It is God who guides the Congregation, and not we.

To my great surprise I have received no letter from you. Try then, I repeat, to write to me every week, since your letters thus miscarry on the way.

I remember, dear Father, that you wrote to me concerning the privileges of the Passionists. I should need much paper to answer you. When Father Grossi arrives at your house, you may speak together of this matter. Meanwhile,

we need not treat about the affair with the Congregation of Bishops and Regulars.

I have not yet received a letter from Father Costanzo; but it is now two months since I gave him permission to come on account of the troubles that have arisen in his family.

Again, when I have more money, I will send it to you. For the present continue to live in peace, and endeavor to arrange for the beginning of December the little missions that must be given in the diocese of Aquino.

Have an understanding with Father Landi and determine together, who are the Fathers that are to be furnished by Scifelli and by Frosinone, so that there may be union and harmony in the giving of these missions. Above all, employ Father [Gennaro] Orlando; he is anxious to join the missionaries.

When Father Mascia has finished his missions, he should return to Naples.

Please tell me, whether Mgr. di Veroli wishes to have another mission for his diocese.

I conclude by blessing you and your companions.

BROTHER ALFONSO MARIA.

After the original preserved in the archives of Father General at Rome.

LETTER 902.

To Father Gasparo Caione, Rector of the House at Benevento.

Joy felt by him on account of the success of missions given in the diocese of Benevento.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

NOCERA, November 19, 1777.

Your letter has been read to me privately, and I am informed of everything.[1] He should not be kept at Caposele, and one might easily . . .[2] I have spoken of it to Father Andrea; he will arrange with Father Cimino what course to pursue.

As for Brother Raffaele, I see that he is very useful to your house, and as I wish to please your Reverence, I will leave him with you, as such is your desire. Scifelli may be aided in another way.

I am glad to hear about the missions already given by your Fathers, and those that are now being given. When the rest are finished, please inform the Cardinal, so that he may be pleased.

I have read what you propose to me about Father Volpicelli, and I see with pleasure that peace reigns in your house.

I bless you, dear Father, and all your subjects, one by one.

I have kept my bed for several days, suffering from a catarrh that threatened to turn out badly; to-day I am better. God and Mary be forever blessed!

BROTHER ALFONSO MARIA.

After the original preserved in the archives of Father General at Rome.

[1] Some words are here effaced in the original.

[2] Same remark.

LETTER 903.

To Father Francesco Antonio de Paola, at Frosinone.

He recommends various things to him and communicates some news.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

NOCERA, November 24, 1777.

I was myself very much astonished to be so long without receiving any news.

I have received the letter addressed by the Sacred Congregation to Cardinal Banditi, and I will keep it for the time when it will be of use.

As regards the exchange of money, I am now without uneasiness.

Let us now speak of the missions. I do not know whether Father Costanzo will go to Naples, for he has not asked again to go there; but, if he went, the three Fathers appointed would suffice, as these missions are small; and, if there should be a larger mission, it would be necessary to defer it. These three Fathers should, moreover, remain for each of these missions.

I will write to Father Orlando and forbid him to gather alms any longer.

We have nothing to do with Araldi. As he increases his debt and pays but little, Signor Campanaro will in time force him to make the contract with us. Let us, then, be quiet; we shall answer when we are asked.

Father Grossi is greatly embarrassed on account of the lawsuit of his brother; he cannot go away; his departure would be the ruin of his family.

As to the letter addressed to Cardinal Banditi, I have answered that I will keep it till we need it.

You ask, who is to be the Superior of the missions?

You will be Superior at one time, at another Father Landi. See now which of you two can more easily be absent.

I have written to Father Landi concerning the candidates for Holy Orders that sleep two in one bed. I sympathize with you in your poverty; however, come to an understanding on this subject with Mgr. di Veroli.

BROTHER ALFONSO MARIA.

[*P. S.*] At Scifelli they have asked for help; but my purse is empty at present, and I can send nothing.

After the original preserved in the archives of Father General at Rome.

LETTER 904.

To the Superior of the House at Iliceto.

He recommends a priest to him.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

NOCERA, November 28, 1777.

The priest Don Giuseppe Castiati will come to you to finish his studies. He is to finish philosophy, of which he has already studied the greater part; then he is to take up Dogmatic Theology, and afterwards Moral Theology.

Please show him the greatest charity; for he is a subject of the king of Sardinia; his native city is Monferrato.[1]

I bless the one that governs the house; I also bless all his subjects.

BROTHER ALFONSO MARIA.

After the original preserved in the archives of Father General at Rome.

[1] St. Alphonsus took a special interest in this vocation, as Don Castiati was the first subject furnished by Piedmont.

LETTER 905.

To Father Francesco Antonio de Paola, Superior of the House at Frosinone.

Various recommendations.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

NOCERA, December 1, 1777.

I send you herewith in five bills of exchange the hundred ducats that I promised you.

I should say that you should try to finish the lawsuit about the patronage of your church; this is, in my opinion, the most important affair. But you may see for yourself, whether there is not a more pressing need.

If you have occasion to write to Father Landi, tell him not to solicit Araldi for the land in question. Let him wait till Campanaro presses the affair of the contract.

I have already sent you the letter of the Sacred Congregation.

I bless you, dear Father, and all your companions.

BROTHER ALFONSO MARIA.

After the original preserved in the archives of Father General at Rome.

LETTER 906.

To Sister Brianna Carafa, in the Monastery of S. Marcellino at Naples.

He rejoices to know that she is still alive, and gives her some advice.

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

NOCERA, December 25, 1777.

My dear Sister and Daughter in Jesus Christ: Your letter has doubly consoled me. I had heard a long time ago of

your illness, and not having received any news since, I believed that God had delivered you from this world.

But now I rejoice that God has permitted you still to live, in order that you may complete the crown that he has prepared for you in heaven, as I firmly believe, when I consider all the vicissitudes that have occurred to you during your life.

As for your niece, I very well see that she will be to you a new cross, and that she will increase the persecution, of which you are the object on the part of your sister, who will criticise all that you will do for this young person; but this is an evil, for which there is no remedy. I am of the same opinion as your director, that if you refuse this cross, it may easily happen that your niece will lose her vocation.

Offer to Jesus Christ from this moment all the trials that you may have to suffer on this occasion, and do not cease to renew this offering to the Lord, who wishes this to be so. Besides, omit on no day to pray for your sister, who will continually persecute you with her criticism.

The Lord has allowed you to live, not that you may rest, but that you may be persecuted, and that you may suffer until death. Courage, then! When you feel the points of the thorns, always say: May God be blessed! May God be blessed!—and then be calm. I repeat, be courageous; God wishes that you should belong entirely to him; he wishes to have you only for himself.

I send you a little work that I finished a short time ago. You may read a passage in it from time to time; you will find therein many beautiful sentiments that unite the soul to God. What have we to do in this world, if not to love Jesus Christ and to suffer for him?

I feel very much obliged to you for the sweetmeats that you have sent me; but what I desire most of you is, that you do not fail to recommend me every day to Jesus Christ, in order that he may sustain me by his grace in all

that I have to suffer from tribulations and continual attacks made on the Congregation, as well as from the infirmities that weigh me down.

During all this time I have never ceased to recommend you every day to Jesus Christ; do the same for me. I do not ask for long prayers; it suffices that you say before the Blessed Sacrament: O Lord! have pity on him, and grant him Thy love.

I bless you in the Heart of Jesus Christ, and remain . . .

Your very humble servant,

ALFONSO MARIA, *Bishop.*

After an old copy.

LETTER 907.

To Baron Castilleti, at Nero, Sicily.

He promises him his prayers and gives him news about his health.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

PAGANI, January 21, 17778.

My Lord: I have received no letter from you before the one which you wrote to me last, otherwise I would not have failed to answer you.

I am very happy to learn that you, the baroness, and your whole family are in perfect health. More than in the past will I pray to the Lord to your intention; may he bless you always, and bestow upon you his grace in abundance, that you may always live more holily.

These past days I have been so very ill, that I believed that I was on the brink of the grave; but at present, thank God! my condition is a little better, although I am not yet entirely restored.

Do not forget me in your prayers, ask the Lord to grant me entire conformity to his holy will and the grace of a good death.

I salute all the members of your excellent family, and I beg you to accept, my dear Baron, the renewed expression of my profound esteem.

Your very devoted and grateful servant,

ALFONSO MARIA DE' LIGUORI, *Bishop.*

After the original preserved in the monastery of the Annunziata at Nero, Sicily.

LETTER 908.

To the Superior of the Congregation of Missionary Priests of the Conference.

He sends him some leaflets containing various counsels useful for missionaries.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

NOCERA DE' PAGANI, January 31, 1778.

Reverend and Dear Father: I send you the enclosed leaflet, which I lately composed for the subjects of the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer. I have addressed a number of copies to you with a view to have them more easily distributed among your young men.

I beg you not to believe me to be so rash as to wish to give lessons to the subjects of your Congregation, in whose ranks are to be found masters more capable than I am. I repeat: the counsels given in this leaflet were especially intended for my companions, and I am certain that your Fathers know them and already practise them perfectly. Nevertheless, I did not believe it useless to refresh the memory of your young men; for, long practice in the ministry has only proved to me, that some preachers make light of certain recommendations contained in this leaflet. These recommendations have, however, appeared to me very conducive to the promotion of the spiritual good of the poor country people who attend these missions.

Please do not forget me in the holy sacrifice of the Mass, and accept the expression of profound respect, with which I have the honor to be, my dear Father,

Your very devoted and grateful servant,

ALFONSO MARIA, *Bishop.*

[*P. S.*] Do not inconvenience yourself to answer this letter. Afford me only the pleasure of gratifying the desire that I have therein expressed.

A word more. You have, no doubt, dear Father, heard about the beautiful French work which Abbè Nonnotte lately published against the infamous *Dictionnaire philosophique* of Voltaire. The errors of this writer and of other authors, who seek to destroy the faith, are therein refuted with great learning and clearness. I have read many authors on these subjects; but I have found none that surpass Abbè Nonnotte. The latter, in fact, is not satisfied with demonstrating the untenability of modern errors; he also establishes all the principal dogmas of our faith, and this with an array of proofs so conclusive and so convincing, that his book appears to me to be really a golden book.

If the book be read without preconceived notions, I am sure that it will gain all hearts to our faith.

You may also know that the work of Nonnotte has already been translated at Venice, and that Signor Cervone has re-published it at Naples in four small volumes. Please, then, dear Father, speak in praise of this work on every occasion, and have it bought or, at least, read, especially by the young men, of whom many have, indeed, had their hearts and minds tainted by the reading of the poisonous books, which our age has produced in so great a number.

After a copy sent by Don Giuseppe Giuliano.

LETTER 909.

To Father Antonio Tannoia, at Iliceto.

On what condition he may receive a postulant.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

NOCERA, February 20, 1778.

I have received your letter in regard to the accusation made against us of having exacted revenues.

The son of the lawyer from Lucera will perhaps call on you, some of these days. Examine the young man to see whether he is in any way capable; for, if he is really deficient, he must be told to study a little longer. The fact, that his father can render us good services at Lucera, is not a sufficient reason why we should receive him.

I bless you and all your subjects.

BROTHER ALFONSO MARIA, *Bishop.*

After the original preserved in the archives of our house at Pagani.

LETTER 910.

To Father Gasparo Caione, Rector of the House at Benevento.

About the manner in which a considerable sum of money is to be employed.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

NOCERA, March 1, 1778.

(*Read attentively.*)

In consultation we have repeatedly discussed the question, to what use should the five hundred ducats given by the Cardinal for Masses be employed. The most reasonable and, without doubt, the most useful course appears to us to be this: we should apply this money to the planting of mulberry, olive, willow, and poplar trees on the farm; for,

these trees are not only productive, they also serve as barriers against inundations, which must always be feared on this property, on account of the great quantity of water that gathers during winter.

On the other hand, I have been informed that the Cardinal has said that the aforesaid sum should be invested in real estate and rentals.

But it must be somewhat warmly represented to his Eminence, that in the city of Benevento there is much money that cannot be invested, either in real estate or in loans at interest. These loans are, moreover, not too sure; while by applying the sum to the improvement of the farm we have an assured income, much more useful than any other purchase.

We have specially talked on this subject with Don Nicola Gallo, the new priest, who has just entered the novitiate, and I desire, dear Father, that you call him and speak to him at leisure. He will explain to you better than I can (for he has more experience in this matter) the advantages to be gained by improving the farm.

You must, then, even in my name, submit to the Cardinal all these observations, so that he may consent to allow us thus to improve our property; for, after all, he desires only our good.

This letter had been written, when Father Andrea [Villani] let me read your letter. I see therein how opposed you are to spend this money on our farm. *There must not be*, you say, *any planting or improvements.*

You will say, dear Father, that you wrote this phrase, in order to side with the Cardinal's opinion, but, I doubt very much whether the Cardinal did not speak to you about real estate and rents, in order not to contradict your opinion.

I am not able to travel, but if I were, I would immediately go to speak to the Cardinal, and I am sure that his Eminence would agree to my opinion, which is the opinion

of all the rest. The reason of this is clear. By applying the money for the improvement of the farm, the profit will be double of that which the best purchase would procure.

I once more ask you to speak to Don Nicola Gallo, and also to Father [Carmine] Picone, who is well versed in these matters: then, when you see the Cardinal, do not urge him, for goodness' sake, to persist in his view and to wish that nothing should be done for our property. Tell him all that I have written to you, and afterwards communicate to me his answer.

In the meantime do not, I beg you, dispose of the money; for, if the Cardinal is opposed to my view, I will write to him a formal letter and prove to him that by employing the sum for the improvement of the farm, the profit will be nearly double of that which could be derived from the best purchase.

Moreover, I will send him one of our Fathers to speak to him at leisure on this subject, and I hope that the Cardinal will yield. Finally, if, notwithstanding all these efforts, his Eminence insists that we should buy funds or real estate, then I will yield out of obedience, but to my great regret, for I evidently see the harm that such a decision will cause.

What displeases me in all this is that the days are gliding away and we shall desire in vain to improve the farm; the time for planting the olive, mulberry, poplar trees and vines will be over, for now is the season for planting them.

I also regret that the houses at Scifelli and Frosinone are reduced to extreme want, otherwise all the money of my pension that I am going to send to them, would be for you, dear Father, and you could use it for the purchase of those plants that can be so useful to us.

I have nothing to add. If all that I have just written makes no impression, either on the Cardinal, or on you, I will offer to God this pain and will try to be patient. It would be against all reason to reject my plan, for I am sure

that, if a hundred persons would deliberate on this matter, not one of them would say that I am wrong.

Once more: do not dispose of the money before all my remarks have been discussed.

I bless you and remain . . .

BROTHER ALFONSO MARIA.

[*P. S.*] If the Cardinal feared that the improvement of the farm would hinder us from fulfilling our obligation as to Masses, I give you my word that I bind myself and bind the whole Congregation to discharge this debt. But never shall I believe, that the Cardinal who is solicitous about our interests, would oppose a matter so evidently useful and twice as lucrative as anything else would be. One thing might induce him to do this, namely, the talk of others, which might render him a victim of a strange illusion.

If, for want of time, all the planting cannot be done, you could put in the ground, at least, those plants that are now in season, for after the month of March it will be too late.

I conclude, for I can no longer hold up my head; but I cannot omit to add a word more. If I have not insisted in the past, as I am doing at present, on the improvement of the farm, it was because I did not believe, that on the part of the Cardinal, or on the part of your Reverence, there would be a shadow of difficulty.

Now please, dear Father, send me by a messenger an answer to all that I have just written; but, do so, after you have consulted Fathers Picone and Gallo on this important subject, and especially after you have spoken firmly and several times, if need be, to the Cardinal.

This foundation at Benevento is the best we have; it is even the only one that gives us bread; and this farm is the only immovable property which, enriched by the planting of which I have spoken, would be capable of sustaining the Congregation, if God wished that we should be deprived of the other houses.

To finish this affair and not to write letter upon letter, I thought that I should send you a special messenger. If you think that by keeping him one day with you, you could send me some definite answer, you may keep him; for this affair has completely upset me for a long time.

Finally, if the Cardinal should not favor my views, beg him at least in my name, to grant me permission to take one hundred ducats at interest to use it for the improvement of the farm. As for the interest of these hundred ducats, I oblige myself to pay it, and thus all difficulties will disappear.

I bless you once more.

After the original preserved in the archives of Father General at Rome.

LETTER 911.

To Abbè Claude-François Nonnotte, at Besançon, France.

He congratulates him for having vigorously combatted in his works the pernicious doctrines of Voltaire, and he encourages him to continue his work.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

[NOCERA, March 1778.]

Reverend and Dear Sir: The writer of this letter is a bishop of the kingdom of Naples. I am eighty-two years old. Age and bad health have compelled me to resign the episcopal charge. Having retired to a house of the Congregation of which I am a member, I find my only solace, in these last days of my life, in reading the excellent works which you have written against Voltaire. May God be thanked for having preserved my life till now, so as to permit me to read these beautiful works! I have them constantly before me, and I call them golden books; for, in each of their chapters I find a learned explanation of the maxims of faith, and also the clearest and most convincing

replies to the infamous works which Voltaire and his adherents have filled with their heresies, their lies and their contradictions.

I should like that your *Errors of Voltaire* would be translated into all languages. I should, above all, be pleased to see printed in every language the still more important work written by you against the *Philosophical Dictionary;* the whole Christian world would then be able to read it.

On my part, I have endeavored to encourage everybody to buy your works; and lately, when a little work of my composition relative to missions, was sent to all the Superiors of the Congregations of Missionaries of Naples, I asked them to recommend your works to every one. I have also read the Brief of the Sovereign Pontiff, Clement XIII.,—a Brief so flattering to your work on the *Errors of Voltaire;* and on the first favorable occasion, I will ask our Holy Father Pope Pius VI. also to honor you with a Brief in praise of the work that you have composed against the *Philosophical Dictionary*. You have, indeed, filled it with excellent dissertations, and have therein perfectly refuted this pernicious dictionary.

If I thus write to you, it is not to testify to you the esteem in which I hold your books; for they stand in no need of my eulogy, since the learned, I am pleased to see, have bestowed upon them their warmest approbation. I wish, above all, to induce you to seize every opportunity to engage in the combat; and if these modern philosophers, true agents of Satan, should again publish any work infected with their errors, do not fail to answer them; for I believe that the Lord has endowed you with an admirable talent for refuting these infamous books, which deserve only to be thrown into the fire, and the daily publication of which ruin a multitude of young men.

I have read many works directed against these unbeliev-

ers; but, I assure you, I have seen none than refutes the current errors with so much ability and clearness as yours.

I conclude by recommending myself to your prayers. For my part, I will ask the Lord to deign to reward you for having defended our faith by these excellent works.

Believe me, Reverend and Dear Sir,

Your very humble and affectionate servant, etc.[1]

After the Roman edition.

1 Vividly impressed by a letter so kind and filled with apostolic zeal, Abbè Nonnotte answered the saint in the following words:

"To the Right Reverend Father in Jesus Christ, Don Alfonso de Liguori, Bishop, Rector Major of the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer, Claude-François Nonnotte, priest of Besançon, offers his most humble regards.

"I do not believe that any one ever experienced more pleasure and satisfaction than I felt, when I read your letter. It is so full of the greatest proofs of charity and kindness; it evinces such love for religion and all virtue, that I was tempted to believe that it was written by an angel rather than by a man. As I am accustomed to appreciate nothing except what is in conformity to the spirit of God, it is an unspeakable pleasure to me to meet with men who also value the things of God alone, and who in themselves being greater than the greatest dignities could make them, cause one to be in doubt, whether one should most admire in them the gift of genius which they possess, or the bright lustre of their virtues. I have often sought after such men, but, if my search has been hitherto vain, your letter, at least, informs me that there is such a man at Naples. I am, therefore, not able to express how high I esteem you and the close affection which hereafter will unite me to you.

"All those that know your excellent and celebrated work on Moral Theology, congratulate me on having received from so learned a bishop so honorable a letter; and I congratulate myself in my turn, to see my books praised by so distinguished a man. In fact, to pass so favorable a judgment on my writings, to praise them as you have praised them, appears to me to be the act of a prelate, as distinguished by his wisdom as he is by his love for religion. But the reading of such eulogies at once recalled to my mind the warning given by our Lord to his disciples. Seeing them one day full of joy at having announced the Gospel, he said to them: *But*

LETTER 912.

To Sister Brianna Carafa, in the Monastery of S. Marcellino at Naples.

He consoles her in her fears and gives her useful advice.—He sends her a pious book.

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

NOCERA, April 11, 1778.

I heard that you were sick, and then I received no more news from you. To-day I was gladdened by seeing again

yet rejoice not in this that spirits are subject unto you: but rejoice in this, that your names are written in heaven. [*Luke*, x. 20.]

"Another thing has also caused me inexpressible satisfaction: it is the intention that you announce of asking the Sovereign Pontiff to issue a Brief in favor of my dictionary ["Le Dictionnaire ant-Philosophique, pour servir de commentaire et de correctif au Dictionnaire Philosophique"], a Brief of recommendation similar to that which my book *Errors of Voltaire* obtained from Clement XIII. I have been very anxious to obtain this favor, and for this purpose I had sent my books to Rome, after having enriched them with an elegant binding and embellished them with ornaments, which made them deserving of reaching the hands of the Holy Father. I have received no answer, although Cardinal Pallavicino, to whom I wrote, has sent me word that he had transmitted them to Pius VI. Will this great Pope disparage my work? or shall I attribute this disappointment to I know not what hidden motive? I leave to your profound wisdom the task of solving this problem.

"You then tell me with the most exquisite benevolence that, if the infernal sect of philosophers should publish any new work, I should combat it. Your counsel has already been followed and your desire realized; I should have even published many other works, if the necessary means had not been wanting. I have already composed a third volume against the *Errors of Voltaire;* I entitled it "The Spirit of Voltaire in his Writings", and I made it my business to prove that, as long as the works of this wretched man are read by our contemporaries, religion can never hope to regain the respect and the love of the people.

"I greatly desired to have this work printed at Paris; but for this

your handwriting, and more so when I learned by your letter that you continue to have Father N. for your director.

Go on as you are doing, and fear nothing.

Your apprehensions make you tremble; what should I think, I who am so near death? Numerous infirmities apprise me that I am reaching the end of my course; I am nearly at the end of my eighty-second year, and, perhaps, I shall not see the beginning of the eighty-third year.

I continue to recommend you to Jesus Christ every morning, and I am confident that you are doing as much for me. Do not forget me in your visit to the Blessed Sacrament, because death is threatening to overtake me.

I send you my last little work, *Divine Love*,[1] and I conclude in blessing you in the Heart of Jesus Christ.

Do not fail to make often acts of love; especially in every one of your meditations repeat nine times: O my Jesus! I

it would be necessary to have the approbation of a royal censor. Now here every one professes so great an admiration for Voltaire, or rather every one fears so much the pen of this satirical writer, that I cannot succeed in finding a censor who is favorable. Even the Archbishop of Paris himself answered me that I would never find any one to approve of my book. The fact is, incredible though it may appear, Catholics dare not print a work composed in defence of religion, and I shall, perhaps, be forced to have the printing done by the heretics of Geneva. This should make one exclaim with Cicero: *O tempora, o mores!* [O the times! O the manners!]

"It is now nearly twenty years that I am fighting the battles of the Lord, deprived of all human aid, and calumniated without ceasing by the impious. My confidence in God has, however, not grown weak, and, far from losing courage, I am growing bolder and bolder every day in this fight, which is the most honorable of all. Your letter will still more stimulate my ardor; for it breathes not only the most ardent zeal for religion, but a delicious charity. May this charity, for which I earnestly pray to God, unite us one day in the heavenly country, as it now unites us in this land of exile!

"Please accept, Reverend and Dear Sir, etc."

[1] "Practice of Divine Love, and the Means of Acquiring It."

give myself to Thee without reserve; do with me what Thou pleasest.

Jesus Christ has promised that his Father would grant us all that we should ask of him in his name; say, therefore, five times every day: O my God! in the name of Jesus Christ, give me Thy love. Have great confidence in these words, and never forget in your meditation to pray for sinners.

After the Roman edition.

LETTER 913.

To the Nuns of the Most Holy Redeemer, in the Convent at Sant' Agata de' Goti.

He recommends to them resignation to God's will.

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

PAGANI, April 21, 1778.

Reverend Mother and Sisters in Jesus Christ: I write to you to-day, Tuesday, at seven o'clock in the evening, after supper, because the courier has just arrived.

I hear the sad news about Mother Maria Raffaela, and God knows what a blow it is to me; but we must be resigned to God's will.

Such being the will of God, think of choosing as your Superior one whom you think to be the best before God, and consult the archdeacon.

Have confidence in Jesus Christ; he will think of keeping you in peace.

Our Father Andrea [Villani] cannot comply with your wish; he is sick.

Trust in Jesus Christ and in Mary, and recommend me in your prayers; for soon you will also hear of my departure for the other world.

I bless you in Jesus Christ, and beg you to believe me, Reverend Mother,

Your very humble servant,

ALFONSO MARIA DE LIGUORI, *Bishop.*

[*P. S.*] I celebrated Mass this morning the 22d inst., for the health of Mother Superior, that God may still leave her in this world a short time for his greater glory.

I send you a picture of the Blessed Bonaventure of Potenza; apply it to the sick person, for this holy man works great miracles.[1]

After an old copy.

1 Mother Maria Raffaela della Carità died on April 26, 1778, as we read in her biography. A portrait of her was at once taken, at the bottom of which we read the following inscription:

"Born at Naples of a very respectable family, Maria Raffaela de Vito consecrated herself to the service of God at Scala, in the convent of the nuns of the Most Holy Redeemer. She exercised the office of Superior at different intervals. A monastery of her Order having been founded at Sant' Agata, she was called by Mgr. Alfonso de Liguori, Bishop of that city, with the consent of Clement XIII. to take charge of it. She thus formed the nuns to the practice of the Rules of the Institute of the Most Holy Redeemer, and fully satisfied the expectations of the prelate. Model of every virtue, she died on April 26, 1778, at the age of seventy-eight years, one month, and twenty days.

"Her sorrowful daughters have consecrated this memento to their excellent Mother and Mistress."

LETTER 914.

To Father Francesco Antonio de Paola, at Frosinone.

Counsels in regard to the house at Frosinone and the pending lawsuit.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

[NOCERA, April 1778?]

Your letter of March 30, has been read to me, and I have been much consoled by the news that you give me of our lawsuit.

It appears that your house is ready for occupation; but, since according to the doctor's opinion, it cannot be occupied before the month of October, I wish you to wait till that time. If afterwards any misfortune should occur, I should not like to have qualms of conscience for having caused the death of any confrère.

The information that you have given me about the condition of the house has also afforded me pleasure.

From now till the month of October or November I cannot send you anything, and after November I cannot promise to give you a large sum; for I have debts, and for the funds that I was to collect in October, I have claims at the present time.

I certainly love Frosinone as much as Scifelli; but at Scifelli there is a number of young men to whom even bread is wanting, as Father Landi writes to me.

It is understood that the missions at Veroli and Frosinone will be given in the month of November, as you have written.

I am glad that Mgr. di Veroli takes a lively interest in the lawsuit; but if you do not secure assistance at Rome, dear Father, we shall be able to do nothing. If one of the two Cardinals, who are our friends, either Santobuono or Marefoschi, protects us, we shall surely be victorious.

Having nothing more to say, I conclude by blessing you and all your subjects.

[*The signature is wanting.*]

Should Molella propose a settlement, I shall be very glad, if Monsignor consents to it, if he thinks it proper. Naturally speaking, I should be inclined to have a formal decision; but we are strangers at Rome, and hence it will always be better for us, I think, to accept an arrangement, if it is proposed to us.

After the original preserved in the archives of Father General at Rome.

LETTER 915.

To the Same.

The sending of pecuniary aid.—He asks him to render a service.—Details concerning the missions.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

[NOCERA, end of April, 1778.]

I have not yet received a single *tornese* [1] from Sant' Agata; and from the College [of Doctors], I could draw hardly eighty ducats. Of these I send you forty; I say *forty;* but as soon as Sant' Agata furnishes me with funds, you shall not be forgotten.

I am now going to cause you a little inconvenience. The celebrated Voltaire has been converted; this you undoubtedly know.[2] Now for my own consolation I have

[1] A piece of money used at Naples.

[2] It was a false rumor, which was soon contradicted. It was then that St. Alphonsus pronounced these remarkable words: "Such conversions are not ordinary graces; they are, in fact, the effects of a great mercy, of uncommon mercy; and God does not grant such a favor to any one, unless he discovers in him, as was the case with St. Paul, the beginning of a good intention. *Now, in Voltaire everything is very bad.*"—*Tannoia*, bk. iv., ch. xi.

resolved to write to him; but I can send him only a letter in Latin. I send you a rough draft of it in the vernacular; please to translate it and put it into the form of a Latin letter as you think best. Translate it and return it immediately; I will have it forwarded to Paris. Do not delay.

I bless you and all your subjects.

Father [Leopoldo] Briscione is to start from home at once; he tells me that there are several missions to be given at Abbruzzo, in the diocese of Salerno, and that at least four Fathers are needed.

For the present, I have no missionary to send; see whether you cannot secure these four missionaries among the Fathers in the Romagna.

As for Father Orlando, it will be better not to employ him on missions; let him remain at home, for I see that he will not be of use in the missions that are to be given in the Romagna. I will call him back to Naples on November 16, and I will arrange that the missionaries, whom you need, are sent to you, as soon as you send me information.

I again bless you, dear Father, and I remain . . .

BROTHER ALFONSO MARIA.

[*P. S.*] I have just heard from Sant' Agata that no money can be collected. We shall then speak of this again in the month of September.

After the original preserved in the archives of Father General at Rome.

LETTER 916.

To François Maria Arouet de Voltaire, at Paris.

He expresses to him his great joy on hearing of his conversion, and suggests to him a means of repairing his scandals.[1]

[NOCERA, beginning of May, 1778.]

The writer of this letter is a bishop nearly worn out with infirmities, and the Sovereign Pontiff has condescended to allow him to resign the bishopric of Sant' Agata de' Goti.

In my last days, at the advanced age of eighty-three, your conversion, which is as happy for you, as it is satisfactory to all good Catholics, has been a subject of so great a joy to me, that I cannot help addressing to you my sincere felicitations.

I was broken-hearted, and I even shed bitter tears, when I saw you employing so badly, and for so long a time, the rare talents with which God has endowed you. Many a time, notwithstanding my profound unworthiness, I addressed to the Most High most fervent prayers, in order that this Father of mercies might cause you to abjure your errors, and draw you entirely to his love.

My ardent desires are this day realized. Your conversion (I speak as I feel) is more advantageous to the Church than the heroic labors of a hundred bands of missionaries could have been.

In order that this joy may be universal and complete, and that the sincerity of your return to God may be free

[1] The news of the conversion of Voltaire was so promptly contradicted, that St. Alphonsus had not even time to send this letter to its destination. This admirable letter will, nevertheless, remain an immortal monument of the zeal displayed by the holy Doctor for the interests of the Church and for the conversion of the most hardened sinners. As for the patriarch of modern infidelity, we know that he died on May 30, 1778, in the most frightful despair, proclaiming himself *abandoned by God and by man.*

from the slightest doubt; you should, in my opinion, write something as a refutation of your previous errors and sophisms. I should be still more pleased, if you would use your pen against a writer [1] who lately has dared to attack the dogmas of our holy faith. Why should you not shatter the arrow in his hands, when he causes immense harm to so many young men, whom the love of free thought carries away boldly to despise their God and to become careless about their souls?

I know that you suffer from your eyes; but the least writing dictated by you would satisfy the expectation of the entire world. Above all, it would reduce to silence those that wish to throw doubt upon your conversion, and that see in all this only dissimulation on your part.

In the meanwhile, I will fervently pray to God, that he may grant you strength, if not to write, at least to dictate some pages to refute the infidels of the day.

Tannoia, Book iv., Chapter xi.

LETTER 917.

To the Nuns of the Most Holy Redeemer in the Monastery of Sant' Agata de' Goti.

He asks them for news and exhorts them to practise perfect observance.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

NOCERA, May 12, 1778.

The death of Sister Maria Raffaella, your Mother, has, you may imagine, caused me profound affliction; I hoped to hear that you had elected a new Superior and that your Community persevered in its usual fervor: this would be a consolation to me; but up to the present time I have received no letter from you.

Be then so kind as to inform me of your affairs. Especi-

[1] Probably Jean Jacques Rousseau.

ally tell me whom you have chosen Superior, and whether the Rule is observed with the same fidelity as before.

I was thinking of sending you a little work which I composed expressly for you. It will keep awake the remembrance of the observances practised in your Community up to the present time; and this remembrance will be useful in preserving the fervor of your first days in religion. As soon as it is printed, I will send it.[1]

In the meantime write to me and give me information about everything, and tell me that, by the grace of God, all goes well.

When I think how far back the foundation of your monastery began, I should be very sorry to hear that the observance of the Rule has relaxed, that already abuses have been introduced; but I do not wish to believe such things.

Send me, then, your answer by way of Naples, and give it to a messenger who may carry it to our lay-brother, who lives in that city. In case this Brother should not be found at the capital, have the letter sent to my printer who lives at Naples, opposite to the Prince della Riccia, in S. Biagio, Publishers' Row. This Signor Onofrio [Paci] will have your answer forwarded through the priest Don Salvatore Tramontano.

I conclude by giving you all my blessing.

Ask our Lord to grant me the grace of a good death. My end is near, for I am suffering very much.

Believe me, my Reverend Mother,

Your very humble servant,

ALFONSO MARIA DE LIGUORI, *Bishop.*

After an old copy.

[1] This little work appeared under the following title: "Counsels addressed to the Nuns of the Most Holy Redeemer, living in the Monasteries of Sant' Agata and of Scala."

LETTER 918.

To Mother Maria Angelica of the Most Blessed Sacrament, Superior of the Nuns of the Most Holy Redeemer, at Sant' Agata de' Goti.

He exhorts her to have confidence in God.

Live Jesus and Mary!

PAGANI, May 24, 1778.

I have received your very long letter, but I did not receive another before. When you write to me, I beg you to express briefly what you wish to say, because I suffer much from my head.

I have heard that you have been appointed Superior of the Community. Do not fear; have confidence in God. It is he that has chosen you; he will give you the strength and the necessary aptitude to govern well.

I have felt great consolation at the beautiful death of Mother Maria Raffaela, and I am very much pleased that you have written a description of it.

Pray to God for me that he may give me the grace of a happy death.

I refrain from answering all the nuns that have written to me, because I cannot depend on my head. I shall not, however, omit to pray for each one of them, in order that God may make them all belong entirely to himself.

I bless them all with you, Reverend Mother, and remain, etc.

After the Roman edition.

LETTER 919.

To Sister Maria Celestina del Divino Amore, Redemptoristine at Sant' Agata.[1]

Utility of humiliations.—Necessity of detachment.

Live Jesus and Mary!

PAGANI, May 24, 1778.

I have received your letter, and I have admired God's conduct in your regard.[2]

I have always seen that, the more you are humbled, the more closely will you be united with the Heart of our Lord; for this good Master loves and enriches with his favors only those that are humble of heart and who embrace humiliations with patience.

Do not cease to pray for me at Sant' Agata; I will not fail to pray for you.

I assure you that I have always esteemed you, and have always spoken in praise of you; but I did not wish to allow

[1] This Sister was one of the four nuns that left Scala to found the monastery of Redemptoristines at Sant' Agata. Called to give her testimony at the process of beatification of St. Alphonsus, she did so in the following words:

"I had scarcely attained the age of reason, when I heard the venerable servant of God spoken of among the religious of the convent of Scala, where I was staying. Later I had frequent occasions to see him, to hear him, to admire his virtues and his zeal, for he came to Scala, either to give novenas, or to preach in our church; once he gave us a retreat. I consulted him particularly in regard to my vocation; the doubts that I had had for some time on this subject, were finally dissipated by the wise counsels of the servant of God. Lastly, I often had occasion to speak to him, when I came to Sant' Agata in company with the other nuns, the founders of the monastery. . ."

[2] The Sister being the only one that survived the four founders, it seemed that she should replace Mother Maria Raffaela. But this was not the case. Hence the following words of the holy Doctor: "I have admired God's conduct in your regard."

my mind to be disturbed, and, therefore, did not meddle with this affair, leaving to God the care of directing the vessel according to the interests of his greater glory.

I bless you most cordially, and I remain,

Your very humble servant,

ALFONSO MARIA DE LIGUORI, *Bishop.*

[*P. S.*] A word more. I see that God calls you to become a saint; but this excess of affection for me, the extreme disquietude on the subject of my illness, all this is not in order.

Every affection, even lawful, in regard to creatures is a bar to the love of our Lord, as long as it goes too far.

Detach yourself, then, from every earthly affection, otherwise you will never belong entirely to God. And if you desire to belong entirely to him, do not continue thinking, whether I am well or ill. It should be sufficient for you, that our Lord, who desires our entire love, does not change in your regard. You should, then, I repeat, detach yourself from your relatives, from your spiritual director; in a word, from all creatures. Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

Conformable to the original preserved in the chapel of the novitiate of our Province in Lower Germany. The postscript is after a copy.

LETTER 920.

To Mother Maria Angelica of the Most Blessed Sacrament, Superior of the Redemptoristines at Sant' Agata.

He does not believe it expedient for Sister Maria Celestina to return to Scala.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

NOCERA DE' PAGANI, May 28, 1778.

I have, indeed, written to Sister Maria Celestina, that I left it free to her, to return to Scala or to remain at Sant'

Agata. But as her letter proves, that she is quite indifferent and perfectly resigned to the will of God, I am now of opinion, that she should positively remain at Sant' Agata, as Mother Assistant. In the present state of affairs she does not depend on the Superior at Scala; for, from the moment in which the Pope charged her with founding your convent, she was no longer subject to the authority of the Superior at Scala. Moreover, your monastery is, so to speak, only at the beginning of its foundation; the nuns there have all entered recently, while Scala possesses many more that are older.

I have written to Sister Maria Celestina, to congratulate her on her spirit of resignation. It is this resignation that makes me say, that she should not leave your monastery.

I bless you, Reverend Mother, and all your subjects.

Your very humble servant,

ALFONSO MARIA DE LIGUORI, *Bishop.*

After an old copy.

LETTER 921.

To the Same.

He sends a little work, the reading of which he strongly recommends.

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

PAGANI, June 5, 1778.

Just this morning I received the little work [1] which you will find enclosed.

I composed it for all the convents of religious, in which regular observance is in vigor, but especially for your monastery of Sant' Agata. I conceived the idea of it after Mother Maria Raffaela's death.

I send you ten copies; keep five copies for yourself, and

[1] *Counsels to the Nuns of the Most Holy Redeemer.*—See Letter 917.

send three in my name to the monastery of Airola, and two to that of Arienzo.

Let me know whether you wish to have more copies; I shall send them to you. In the meantime I shall have the same work distributed among several monasteries of Naples.

Recommend me to Jesus Christ; for my health is very much shattered. Do not, however, omit to write to me from time to time on the subject of your affairs, but in a few words, since I can no longer read much, and am like a corpse. I beg every one to recommend me to Jesus Christ, when she visits the Blessed Sacrament.

I ask you to read this little work several times a year; let every one read it, at least, when she is making her retreat privately.

I especially recommend to all to put in practice the thirty-ninth exhortation, in which the religious are requested to pray for sinners, and especially for infidels and those who live separated from the Church. The religious that does not pray for sinners, proves thereby that she has but little love for Jesus Christ. Those that love this sweet Redeemer, would wish to see him loved by every one. I, therefore, recommend to you all sinners and the souls in purgatory.

Pray also for me, so that Jesus Christ may give me a good death, for I feel myself greatly troubled in mind, and I tremble at the thought, that I must soon appear before this great judge.

When you address any exhortation to the Sisters, always recommend to them the observance of the Rules. I grieve to see so many monasteries that began full of fervor, and afterwards fell into relaxation.

Boldly oppose the abuses that may arise; it is the want of vigilance that causes the monasteries to become little by little relaxed and become houses altogether profane, without

piety and without love for God. Hence, on the day of judgment we shall see many religious damned, especially those that have introduced abuses, and those that were able to remedy them, and neglected to do so.

I bless you and all the Sisters, each one in particular.

After the Roman edition.

LETTER 922.

To the Same.

He reassures her in regard to the validity of her election.

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

PAGANI, June 18, 1778.

Reverend Mother: The Superior of Scala has also written to me; but I answered her that your election was made under the direction and presidency of the archdeacon, who is a learned and zealous man.

Hence I say to you what was said to you by the Vicar Capitular, that you should continue to exercise the duties of the charge that God has imposed upon you; and if any one speaks against your election, answer her that she should write to the archdeacon, who will remove all doubts.

I, however, praise you for having shown yourself ready to resign, if it became necessary.

Now you must be tranquil; whatever may be the reflections of others, do not mind them; content yourself with saying: I have accepted this charge in obedience to the order of my Superior, who is the Vicar Capitular. That is enough; think no more about it.

I send you ten more copies of my little work on regular observance. Have the Litany recited for me for three days, because I am in great trouble.

I bless you and all the Sisters.

Your very humble servant,

ALFONSO MARIA, *Bishop.*

[*P. S.*] Have the enclosed letter forwarded to Father Master Caputo.

After an old copy.

LETTER 923.

To Don Liborio Carfora, Rural Dean, at S. Maria de Vico.

He expresses to him his joy that a new church has been opened for worship.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

NOCERA, June 19, 1778.

Very Reverend and Dear Sir: Your letter has greatly consoled me, since it informed me that the church of S. Nicola, after so many delays and difficulties, has finally been opened for divine worship.

I thank our Lord for having brought about this result, and I also thank you, Very Reverend Sir, for what you have done for this end. I hope that, after some time, I shall hear of the completion of the church.

Meanwhile, please recommend me to our Lord in your holy Mass; for my death is near. Please accept the expression of affectionate respect with which I am,

Very Reverend Sir,

Your very devoted servant,

ALFONSO MARIA, *Bishop.*

After an old copy.

LETTER 924.

To Mother Maria Angelica of the Most Blessed Sacrament, Superior of the Redemptoristines at Sant' Agata de' Goti.

He rejoices that peace has been restored.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

NOCERA, July 8, 1778.

Reverend Mother: I am consoled to hear that at last calm has succeeded your agitation.

I am very glad that Mother Maria Celestina has been named Assistant, and I request you to try to conform as much as possible to her view in doubtful matters, so that perfect harmony may reign between both of you.

I send you the *Victories of the Martyrs;* [1] have it read in the refectory.

I beg you to recommend me to Jesus Christ. I bless you in a special manner, and I also bless all the Sisters, every one in particular.

Your very humble servant,

ALFONSO MARIA DE LIGUORI, *Bishop.*

After an old copy.

LETTER 925.

To Sister Maria Giovanna Della Croce, in the Monastery at Camigliano.

He points out to her what should be her conduct in spiritual trials.

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

NOCERA, September 18, 1778.

I have received your letter, and it informs me that you are in spiritual darkness.

[1] This is a work by St. Alphonsus, entitled: "Victories of the Martyrs; or, Lives of the most celebrated Martyrs of the Church."

Do not neglect to have confidence in the blood of Jesus Christ and in the goodness of Mary, even when all your prayers appear to you as lost. Say always: *O my Jesus! it is in Thy blood that I rest all my hopes. O Mother of God! it is to thy mercy that I confide my eternal salvation.* Continue to say your prayers in this manner, although it may seem to you that Jesus and Mary do not hear you.

Be mindful to recommend me to both; I shall do so for you. Be of good cheer; for we have a good Master, who died in order to save us.

Moreover, do not fail to recommend poor sinners who live in disgrace with God.

I bless you, and conclude by saluting the *religious (monaca) of the family* [1] of whom you have spoken to me. Let her also recommend me to Jesus Christ, that I may obtain the grace of a good death.

I am, Reverend Mother,

Your very humble servant,

ALFONSO MARIA DE LIGUORI, *Bishop.*

After an old copy.

LETTER 926.

To Mother Maria Angelica of the Most Blessed Sacrament, Superior of the Redemptoristines at Sant' Agata de' Goti.

Counsels regarding the observance of a particular rule.

Live Jesus and Mary!

NOCERA, October 7, 1778.

I have read your letter attentively.

The rule respecting the conference is, as you know, one of the most important. It is also necessary that the Superior should hear all those that come to confer with her.

[1] Thus were called in Italy those virtuous persons who wore the religious habit, although remaining with their family.

Hence, in future pay no attention to what others may say to the contrary, and continue as you are doing.

As for temptations, abstain from putting questions; but, when the Sisters speak to you about them, listen to them, point out a remedy, and do not mind those that think otherwise.

In a word, make no scruple (as the confessors have told you), to hear all that the Sisters make known to you; hear them, and answer what they ask of you.

Recommend me every day to Jesus Christ, and have the Sisters recite every day an *Ave Maria* for me. I bless you and all your officials.

Believe me, Reverend Mother,

Your very humble servant,

ALFONSO MARIA DE LIGUORI, *Bishop.*

After an old copy.

LETTER 927.

To Don Michele Tezza, at Cirignola.

He informs him of a restitution.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

NOCERA DE' PAGANI, October 20, 1778.

Dear Sir: I received through the confessional ten ducats which belong to you.

Please to designate a person at Naples, to whom I may forward this sum, and receive from him a receipt, thus discharging me as soon as possible from this obligation.

I am, dear Sir, entirely at your service, and beg you to believe me,

Your very devoted servant,

ALFONSO MARIA DE LIGUORI, *Bishop.*

After the original preserved in the archives of Father General at Rome.

LETTER 928.

To the Syndic and Municipal Counsellors of Corletto.

It being impossible for him to send them missionaries, he refers them to the Superior at Caposele.

Live Jesus and Mary!

PAGANI, December 12, 1778.

Gentlemen: Your request appears to me to be perfectly just, and I greatly praise the zeal with which you are animated for the glory of God, and for the spiritual interests of the people.

I should very much like to satisfy you, but it is impossible; for the Fathers of this house and those of Ciorani have been engaged for nearly a month in giving missions in Calabria and other places, and they will be thus engaged till next summer. As for the Fathers at Caposele, they are now evangelizing the diocese of Tricarico, and I know not how long a time they will be thus engaged. I have, therefore, no missionaries at my disposal.

You might write in my name to the Superior of *Mater Domini*, at Caposele, and ask him whether he can accept the mission at Corletto.

Please accept, Gentlemen, the expression of my perfect consideration, and believe me,

Your very devoted servant,

ALFONSO MARIA DE LIGUORI.

After an old copy.

LETTER 929.

To Mother Maria Angelica of the Most Blessed Sacrament, Superior of the Redemptoristines at Sant' Agata de' Goti.

He thanks her for her good wishes at Christmas.

Live Jesus and Mary!

PAGANI, December 25, 1778.

May God reward you for the charity you have shown in offering me your well-wishes for Christmas.

I most cordially thank you and all the good nuns. Offer also my thanks to Don Gaetano, whose zeal is exercised with so much ardor in rendering you all perfect spouses of Jesus Christ.

I have been in bed for some time, suffering from catarrh, expecting death whenever God wishes. Recommend me to our Lord, and ask all the Sisters to do the same. You know the esteem in which I hold them.

I bless you, Reverend Mother, and your whole Community.

Please offer my regards to Don Gaetano, if he is still with you, and believe me,

Your very devoted and grateful servant,

ALFONSO MARIA DE LIGUORI, *Bishop.*

After an old copy.

LETTER 930.

To a Religious.

He informs her of the state of his health, and gives her some advice.

Live Jesus and Mary!

PAGANI, December 26, 1778.

I thank you very much for your good wishes, and I beg the Lord to reward your charity by blessing you, body and soul.

As for myself, I have been keeping my bed these past several days, suffering from a violent catarrh, and am expecting death very soon. For this reason I am not able to read even the letters of the subjects of the Congregation.

In regard to what you have written to me, follow the advice of your confessor, and you will not go astray. He holds the place of God; through him you may know the divine will.

Have a reasonable affection for your confessor; this I think is necessary; for, you will thereby be so much the more disposed to do what he prescribes for you, and to avoid what may displease him.

Moreover, regard him only as a guide who aids you in the affair of your eternal salvation, and live in such indifference that, if you lose him, you would be disposed to wish what the Lord wishes.

Pray to Jesus Christ for me, and believe me,

Your very devoted and grateful servant,

ALFONSO MARIA DE LIGUORI, *Bishop.*

After an old copy.

LETTER 931.

To Father Francesco Antonio de Paola, at Frosinone.

He complains that he is never consulted about the affairs of Frosinone.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

NOCERA, February 19, 1779.

I have already written to Father Leggio that the information given me about Frosinone is very superficial; nothing is fully explained to me. This very evening, I learned some news through Father Ficocelli, namely, about the final settlement by Mgr. di Veroli. But what is this settlement? to what did Mgr. di Veroli agree? Of all this not a word is added; no doubt, in order to follow the old custom of not enabling me to see things more clearly than before.

Let me act, you say in concluding your letter.

I never prevented you from acting; but it never was my intention, that the affairs of the Congregation should be settled without sending me information.

Thank God, I am not yet dead, and I have not yet lost my senses. I have been a lawyer, I have been a bishop; many a time I had to transact similar affairs. I am now Rector Major; why, then, should I not be consulted?

For pity's sake, let me know what is going on, what is being negotiated, and with whom. Formerly, I gave innumerable counsels, either as bishop, or as lawyer, and to-day, according to your view, I have become incapable of doing anything.

But let us say no more about this matter. In future I wish to be informed of everything concerning the lawsuit of the church at Frosinone.

Up to the present I had been left in the dark as to the condition of affairs. Now I am told that we have lost the

chaplaincy; that we have lost the property; that we have lost the church. I would not like to receive again similar good news. Please tell me, with whom you have begun to negotiate the settlement; on what basis it was arranged; what was the advice of the Bishop of Veroli. Tell me, and then I will answer you.

All that has been done so far was to send me, after innumerable requests, the papers of lawyer Massei; but they were taken from me almost immediately. May God be always praised! I accept from his hands all these mortifications.

I bless you, dear Father, and remain . . .

BROTHER ALFONSO MARIA.

[*P. S.*] I learn, but always through Father Ficocelli, that you desire certain Fathers from the kingdom of Naples. Those that are not otherwise engaged, will be sent. I regret, however, not to have any money at present, not even for the journey to Rome.

I must say that there is, perhaps, no other house that has caused me more trouble than that of Frosinone. May God be forever praised!

I have been told about the two Fathers that are to go to your house; but when the time comes, send two horses to take them, for I have not the means of procuring a coach; I could hardly pay for one.

Father Cimino cannot accompany them; for he is to go to his native place.

After the original preserved in the archives of Father General at Rome.

LETTER 932.

To Sister Maria Angela Rosa Graziano, in the Monastery del SS. Rosario, at Naples.

He compassionates her in her afflictions.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

NOCERA, April 9, 1779.

I have received your letter, and I regret to hear of your interior trials. I have asked the Lord to remove them from you.

I have written to Don Gaetano di Geronimo to ask him to go to hear your confession; my letter was addressed by way of Naples to Brother Michele [Ilardo], with the request to have it taken to you at once.

I restrict myself to these few lines. Please recommend me to our Lord, I always pray for you. I bless you, Reverend Mother, and remain,

Your very humble servant,

ALFONSO MARIA DE LIGUORI, *Bishop.*

After an old copy.

LETTER 933.

To Father Angelo Maione, at Naples.

Joy afforded him by the mediation of some eminent persons in favor of the Congregation.

Live Jesus, and the Most Holy Virgin!

PAGANI, April 12, 1779.

My dear Father Angelo: Affairs appear to me to have taken a favorable turn. Leave it all to Jesus Christ! He has wrought miracles to sustain us in these persecutions and he will not permit, I am sure, that his work should be destroyed, a work so profitable to poor sinners. From

Calabria, from Puglia, from the Basilicata, from the diocese of Benevento, from Sicily, and from the Roman Campagna, I receive touching details of the great labors undertaken by our Fathers. May God be forever praised!

I think it will be well to send information to Monsignor, the Grand Almoner. In this way he will know the real state of affairs, when the ordinance is published; but act in this matter as you think to be most prudent.

I shall not omit to have frequent inquiries made at the post for letters from the Marshal [Pignatelli] and from the Duchess of Montecalvo. Meanwhile, please assure the lady that we, the whole Community and myself, still recommend her to Jesus Christ and to his Blessed Mother Mary, that she may be comforted; and I hope, that they will give her those graces which will promote the greater glory of God, and which she herself desires. For, since she is interested in the things of God, he, in his turn, will interest himself in her affairs.

I should never have imagined that God would open this way to us. Who knows, whether he does not wish to use these persons to procure peace for our Congregation, and to enable them to acquire for themselves the merits of this good work.

My health goes from bad to worse; but I assure you that I shall die extremely happy, if our Lord and the Most Blessed Virgin Mary will let me see peace firmly established in our Community.

Offer to the persons, of whom I have spoken, my most respectful thanks. Later on I intend to do so myself by letter; but do not forget to offer them now my kindest regards.

I bless you, dear Father, and please remember me at holy Mass.

BROTHER ALFONSO.

After the original preserved in a family at Montirotondo.

LETTER 934.

To the Fathers and Brothers of the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer.

Recommendations relative to missions and to regular observance.

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

PAGANI, July 10, 1779.

The advanced age in which I find myself, and much more, the continual maladies that afflict me, convince me that these recommendations are the last that I shall address to you, my very dear Fathers and Brothers. This makes me believe, that you will be disposed to put in practice all the counsels that I give you in the name of Jesus Christ, because you will regard them as the last pledge of my affection for you.

It is true, I have very great reason to rejoice, since I have learned that in our houses every one lives according to observance and with regularity, every one striving to reach the end for which our Lord has called him into the Congregation. It is, however, also true that, to my great regret, as has been reported to me, many abuses have crept into the Congregation, chiefly in regard to the missions—abuses to which a remedy must, by all means, be applied.

Thus, to begin with the missions, I beg the Superiors as well as the subjects, scrupulously to observe the ancient custom in regard to food and drink, and to heed the prohibition of going about the country, except in so far as the exercise of the apostolic ministry requires it. It is known to all that we always held in abhorrence the eating of poultry, dainties, and the drinking of exquisite and costly beverages; now I hear with great sorrow that this is but little, or not at all, observed. I have even been told that

some have gone so far as to seek for that which gratifies the palate, and that more than once they have exchanged the wine, or sent for wine from a distance; this has been done to the great surprise of the people. It is also said that some go out walking, and make more than necessary or customary visits.

If we act in this manner, how can we expect God to co-operate with his laborers in their undertakings and to bless their work? and how will the people draw fruit from the sermons, if the actions of the missionaries contradict their words? Let the Superiors watch carefully over this matter, and let them allow chocolate only to those that are really in need of it.

I, moreover, enjoin upon the Superiors to see that the Chapter of faults takes place at the end of every mission.

They shall never give a dispensation from the half-hour's mental prayer; for the laborer must be himself enlightened, if he wishes to enlighten others; and, in order to enkindle in the hearts of others the fire of divine love, he himself should be inflamed with it. Now all this is found in prayer.

They shall always employ the young Fathers in hearing the confessions of men, according to the custom that has been followed since our Congregation has been founded.

We should, above all, never receive compensation, presents, or money from the parishes, for fear that the missions become odious and thus the exercise of the ministry, on which our Institute is founded, be ruined, or, at least, its efficiency lessened.

To pass now from the missions to matters referring to the interior government of the houses.

Every Minister shall take care to make an inventory of all the things that are in the house, namely, in the sacristy, tailor's room, kitchen, cellar, and other places, in order to see whether anything is wanting, and in order to maintain good order in the Communities.

Moreover, as the Rule prescribes, accounts should be kept of what is received and expended, and expenses exceeding ten ducats should not be made without the consent of the Admonitor and the Consultors. If this order be neglected, I charge the Admonitors to inform me at once, in order that a suitable remedy may be applied.

The Rectors shall not give to any subject, whoever he may be, the permission to remain outside of the house more than eight days; and if a longer stay be necessary, permission must be asked of the Rector Major, to whom the subject should write every month, in order that it may be known, where he is, and for what reason he remains from home.

The Rectors shall never admit strangers to the first table, and much less allow servants or common people to eat at the second table; another place should be assigned to them for this purpose. During the first period of the Congregation, this point was observed with all possible precaution; but, at the present time, great negligence has been remarked in this matter.

In order that all that I have affectionately recommended to you may be put in force, and may be faithfully observed, I have taken the resolution to send every year, if it so pleases God, a Visitor to each house, who is to be my representative. Whenever he discovers, that my exhortations have not been put in practice, as happens so very often, and that my solicitude in urging you to reform the abuses introduced has served only to fill the paper on which I have written, he will be obliged to inform me of the fact, in order that I may apply a suitable remedy. Meantime, the transgressors should know, that they will not remain unpunished by Jesus Christ, since they did not wish to listen to the orders given to them by his representative.

Finally, I recommend to you in general the strict observance of the Rule, professed by you, and while begging

you all to remember me in your prayers, I cheerfully give you, my Fathers and Brothers, as a token of the tender affection I bear you, my paternal benediction.

ALFONSO MARIA, *Bishop*,
Rector Major.

After the original preserved in the archives of Father General at Rome.

LETTER 935.

To the Students of the Congregation.

He makes known to them the needs of Sicily, and asks them to devote themselves to the missions of this country.

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

NOCERA, August 16, 1779.

My dear Brethren: You always preserve, I hope, the desire to be entirely devoted to Jesus Christ. This desire made you enter the Congregation, and this desire you more especially renewed, when you made your profession, by which you consecrated yourselves without reserve to the love of Jesus Christ.

I will now ask you to make a sacrifice for Jesus Christ. Father Lauria, who has come from Girgenti, tells me that our brethren in Sicily are too few to be able to satisfy the spiritual wants of this diocese and of the neighboring countries; and now the Archbishop of Palermo, Mgr. Sanseverino, also wishes to have some of our subjects to give missions, especially in the diocese of Monreale. Consequently, there is a demand, at least, of two more Fathers to give all the missions that are asked for by the people, who are so very numerous. In Girgenti alone there are more than two hundred thousand souls.

This being the case, as soon as you finish your studies, I should like to know, which of you feels himself disposed to

labor in Sicily, where our missions are so numerous, and where they produce much fruit.

Those among you that are animated with this zeal have no need to write to me privately; it will suffice, if they make known their willingness to Father Sorrentino, who will take care, as I have told him, to inform me; and I will specially remember those among you who will be the first to offer themselves for this work, so useful to the glory of God.

I need not say more to you; meanwhile, I bless you with all my heart, every one of you in particular, and I beg you to recommend me every day to the Blessed Sacrament, since my death is so near at hand.

Your very affectionate confrère,

ALFONSO MARIA DE LIGUORI,
Rector Major.

After the original preserved in the archives of Father General at Rome.

LETTER 936.

To Father Pietro Paolo Blasucci, in Sicily.

He expresses his fears regarding the house at Girgenti.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

NOCERA, August 20, 1779.

. . . . . If I were to believe what certain subjects say, I should have to abandon the hope of seeing the house at Girgenti resist so many trials; but I will recall the Fathers only when I see that the situation is absolutely desperate.

Write to me, dear Father, and give me some consolation, for I greatly fear that this house, which is doing so much good, will be destroyed.

But God, I hope, will spare me this affliction before calling me to himself.

After an old and incomplete copy.

LETTER 937.

To Father Angelo Maione, at Naples.

A decree of the king gives new guarantee to the stability of the Congregation in the kingdom of Naples.—Joy of the saint.[1]

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

NOCERA, August 23, 1779.

Glory be to the Father, to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost! Father Cimino has slowly read to me the decree, and I will say three Masses in thanksgiving.

[1] Our adversaries had tried to prove that, notwithstanding the prohibition of King Charles III., our Fathers had constituted themselves into a religious Order, properly so-called, and formed Communities governed by laws and statutes, and depending on a Superior-General and local Superiors. At other times such an accusation would have been at once repelled, since it is impossible for an association to live without a head and without rules. But under the circumstances in which the Fathers were living in 1779, and with the well-known opposition of the Neapolitan government in regard to religious Orders, it was greatly feared that this complaint might bring about the ruin of the Congregation. This catastrophe was, in fact, threatened; but God once more baffled the designs of his enemies, and contrary to all expectations, Marquis Carlo de Marco on August 21, addressed to the holy Founder the following decree composed in the name of the king:—

"Your Lordship: I presented to the king your Lordship's remarks concerning certain allegations, which aim at the destruction of the Congregation of Missionaries, over which you preside. His Majesty has ordered me to reply to you in the following terms. The Catholic king, his august father, permitted the missionaries, of whom your Lordship is the head, to give missions in the kingdom, and to live in the four houses which they possess at Ciorani, at Nocera, at Caposele, and at Iliceto. He even, in order to assure the future of this beautiful work, fixed by a general rule the conditions of the existence of its members. His Majesty, therefore, consents that each of the four houses may have a Superior to direct it, and that therein may be established the offices necessary for this

Let us, then, heartily thank our Lord, and also the Most Blessed Virgin, to whom I recommended this affair most particularly.

My thanks to Marquis de Marco, to the Grand Almoner, to you also, my dear Father; for you have displayed so great a zeal for the success of this important negotiation; thanks also to the official, Vecchietti, who has greatly aided us.

I feel more unwell than usual; but I will die very happy, I assure you, if our Lord and the Blessed Virgin will let me see peace secured to our Congregation. . . .

Tannoia, Book iv., Chapter xii.

kind of association. As it was, moreover, the intention of the Catholic king, that the future of this laudable work be assured, his Majesty also permits you to receive young men and to see that they devote themselves to the necessary studies. In this way the latter may acquit themselves of the duties imposed upon them by the association, and they will replace those who cannot be of service to it, because of their advanced age and their infirmities, or who are dismissed as unfit for that kind of ministry, or who leave the Community through their own free will. His Majesty, however, wishes that all the conditions, fixed by the general rule, of which mention was made, be exactly observed; and in regard to the ordination of young men, furnished by different places of the kingdom, the sovereign law, established by his Majesty, as to the proportion between the clergy and the people, must be rigorously observed. By order of the king, I communicate this royal decision to your Lordship, that it may be your rule of conduct.

NAPLES, August 21, 1779. CARLO DE MARCO.

LETTER 938.

To his Brother, Don Ercole de Liguori.

Disapproval of the proposed marriage of his nephew, Giuseppe.[1]

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

NOCERA, September 1, 1779.

I have received your second letter concerning the marriage of little Giuseppe; but I know not how to answer you. Giuseppe is too young to think of marrying, and, according to what I hear, the girl is also very young; I mean the daughter of Vespoli.

I would, indeed, like to enter into relations with Counsellor Vespoli, for he is a man of well-known prudence; but it is a very dangerous thing to treat now of a marriage which cannot be realized before six or seven years have elapsed. I am old; to-day, or to-morrow, I shall be in eternity; you are also advanced in age. If Giuseppe is settled, at the age of fifteen or sixteen years, I know not where it will all end.

I told you in my last letter that I expected you here, as such an affair cannot be settled by letter.

Nevertheless, before coming to see me, you should consult some discreet person. When you have thus examined this matter at leisure, you may come to talk it over with me and the Fathers. As I already told you in my

1 "Notwithstanding the cares of every kind with which Alphonsus was overwhelmed," says Father Tannoia, "he still thought of his young nephews who were students of the College of Nobles. Hence he strongly opposed the project formed by his brother Don Ercole, to give in marriage his eldest son Giuseppe to the daughter, the heiress, of Counsellor Vespoli. The child was not yet thirteen; but Don Ercole, seeing himself growing old, wished that the future of his son be assured." It was this that gave occasion to the saint's letter.

last letter, the house at Nocera is always ready to receive you.

I repeat, do not say a word of this marriage to little Giuseppe; but I fear that he has already heard it spoken of. He is at college, and I am glad of this; for, if he were at home, one or the other servant would not fail to speak of this marriage and make him lose the grace of God by suggesting impure thoughts to him.

I conclude by cordially embracing you.

Your very affectionate brother,

ALFONSO MARIA.

[*P. S.*] When you go to Naples, you could, if you think proper, speak of this marriage to Father Maione, but in secrecy. Write me afterwards the result.

After the original preserved in the archives of Father General at Rome.

LETTER 939.

To Father Mattia Bartolomeo Corrado, at Ciorani.

He protests that he will neither make nor tolerate any change in the Rule of the Institute.[1]

[NOCERA, September 4, 1779.]

My dear Don Bartolomeo: I learn that several among you suspect that I wish to establish a new Rule, different from the old one.

[1] This is the beginning of the celebrated affair called the affair of the *Regolamento*, of which mention will frequently be made in the following letters.

As we have seen in Letter 937, St. Alphonsus had received a royal decree, dated August 21, by virtue of which it was permitted him to establish Superiors and other officials in the four houses of the kingdom, and to instruct young men conformably to the end of the Institute. Full of joy at this result, which had cost him many struggles and many annoyances, he believed that the moment had arrived when he might solicit in the same way, if not the explicit

How could such a suspicion ever have entered the mind of any one, since I have always watched with the greatest care over the observance of the Rule? I have always governed the Congregation, in conformity with this Rule, and till my last breath I will oppose with all my strength the changing of even one iota in the Rule. . . .

Tannoia, Book iv., Chapter xix.

approbation of the Congregation, at least a concession that would be equivalent to the confirmation in substance, of the Rule approved in 1749, by Benedict XIV. His Consultors being of the same opinion, he charged Fathers Maione and Cimino to negotiate this important affair at Naples. These Fathers set to work immediately; but, when they found themselves confronted by innumerable difficulties, and discovered the intentions of the king or of his ministers, they came to a decision, of which they, perhaps, did not calculate the import, but which was to have the greatest consequences. Of their own free will, without writing a word to St. Alphonsus, and only in accord with Mgr. Testa, the Grand Almoner, they modified the Rule in essential points, and transformed it into a *Regolamento* which would surely obtain the royal approbation. They had acted with the greatest secrecy; however, God permitted that some Fathers should find out what had been done. Father Corrado wrote at once to St. Alphonsus to complain; but Alphonsus knew nothing of the affair; he was even persuaded that what was done at Naples, was done in conformity with his orders, and that the Rule would be protected rather than destroyed. He could, therefore, only contradict the rumors that were beginning to spread.

LETTER 940.

To Marquis Domenico Antonio di Avena, Counsellor of the Royal Chamber of S. Chiara at Naples.

He acknowledges the receipt of a draft and offers him his best wishes.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

NOCERA, September 20, 1779.

My dear Domenico Antonio: I received the draft for ten ducats which you have sent me. I thank you very much, and I have at once ordered the celebration of forty Masses.

Our Lord and the Blessed Virgin will, I hope, bless your holy desires and will always aid you in the office which you hold, in order that you may promote in everything the glory of God and the interests of your neighbor.

I find myself near eternity, towards which I am impelled by years and infirmities. Please, then, my dear Sir, to recommend me to our Lord, that I may be in his holy grace when the hour of death arrives.

You may rest assured that I am continually recommending you to Jesus and Mary. Accept the sentiments of sincere esteem, with which I have the honor to be, my dear Sir,

Your very devoted and grateful servant,

ALFONSO MARIA DE LIGUORI, *Bishop.*

After the Neapolitan edition of 1848.

LETTER 941.

To Don Marco Antonio d'Ambrosio, at Arienzo.

He recommends to him Alessio Pollio, his servant.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

NOCERA DE' PAGANI, September 20, 1779.

My dear Marco Antonio: Alessio tells me that your brother, Signor Fabrizio, has in his possession certain acts passed last year in the chancery of Arienzo. These acts refer to the dowry of the wife of Alessio, a dowry that Ludovico di Addio has owed him for some time.

You will afford me pleasure, if you draw the attention of your brother to this matter; let him try to do what he can to receive this dowry, for Alessio is in want, his wife having become bed-ridden for a long time.

Please render me this service, and I shall feel greatly obliged to you. Think of me in your prayers, that the Lord may grant me the grace of a good death, for I am approaching my end.

I remain ever

Your very devoted and grateful servant,

ALFONSO MARIA DE LIGUORI, *Bishop.*

After an old copy.

LETTER 942.

To the Fathers of the House at Ciorani.

He orders the demolition of the cupola of the convent church.—He rigorously exacts obedience.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

[NOCERA, October 1779.]

I fear, my brethren, that after the long debates about the cupola, some of you will rejoice to have, at last, gained

their point, in having this part of the church taken down. I, however, desire that you should rejoice in seeing obedience preferred to everything.

I have hitherto been undecided on the question, whether or not it be necessary to take down this cupola; finally, however, after having more maturely considered the matter, I have to-day decided, in accord with my Consultors, that the cupola should be taken down.

Even had you been of a contrary opinion, this part of the edifice would now be condemned. There was, then, no need of your making such efforts, of writing so many letters, of taking so much trouble to bring about its destruction. The fact is, had God not made it known to me, that the cupola should be removed, I should have feared that your obedience, and with it the Congregation, would have been done away with.

I recall to your mind that quite recently the king in his ordinances has declared me the head and the Rector Major of the Congregation.[1] In future, therefore, you should

1 The authority of head and Superior of the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer, St. Alphonsus held not from the king of Naples, but from the Rule, approved by the Holy See. The holy Founder knew this better than any one else.

If he proclaims himself established and recognized as such by the king, it was only on account of the critical circumstances that then presented themselves. On the one hand, the Neapolitan government, jealous of the authority of the Holy See, and always inclined to encroach upon the spiritual domain, had its eyes very attentively fixed upon the religious Orders. Having contributed its share to the recent suppression of the Jesuits, it was ready to strike at every religious Congregation that it suspected of being independent of the royal power. On the other hand, certain religious, who knew the disposition of the government, and whose obedience was not very solid, would easily have been tempted to have recourse to the royal power, to dispense themselves of obeying their Superiors, especially when the latter had not been recognized by the State.

Hence we may understand why, here and in many subsequent

know that the judgment of the Rector Major in important matters, after he has taken the advice of the majority or of the sounder part of his Consultors, should prevail over your private opinions; otherwise you would all be Rector Majors, and the Congregation would no longer exist after obedience has disappeared.

I desired to note all this in order to make you know, that in future I will exact a rigorous account of their conduct from the Fathers who, knowing that a determination has been arrived at by me with prudence and with the advice of others, oppose it and refuse to obey, contrary to the will of our monarch, who wishes that I should govern this Congregation.

Our vocation is for men who wish to become saints and to belong entirely to God. Those that wish to live attached to themselves, will easily lose their vocation. Hence I am continually praying to God for myself and for all my brethren to grant us the grace of belonging entirely to him.

I hope, moreover, that a large number, even the greater number of you, will walk on the path of duty without any care except that of pleasing God, and of practising with exactness the most necessary virtue in the Congregation, namely, the virtue of obedience; but not all walk on this path.

Some desire certain things; but because they avoid asking for them, for fear of being refused, they remain in trouble and lead an imperfect life.

I, indeed, confess my weakness: I have neglected to correct certain subjects, in order not to give them pain; but hereafter I will put down without fear the faults that I hear of, especially the faults against obedience. And if I find that a subject leaves much to be desired on this point,

letters, St. Alphonsus thought it proper to bring out prominently the title of Superior and head, as recognized by the king of Naples.

I will drive him without pity from the Congregation. Our sovereign has given me the power of doing so in his ordinance of August 21, 1779: "Those subjects," he says, "who render themselves useless and who cannot labor for the salvation of souls as their ministry requires of them, should be dismissed from the Congregation." Now these subjects render themselves useless, and are incapable of fulfilling their duties, *who do not obey the Rector Major* appointed by his Majesty to govern the Congregation.

When one wishes to persevere in God's service and become a saint, he should seek only one thing, that is, to please God.

I, the undersigned BRO. FRANCESCO ANTONIO ROMITO, declare that I wrote the foregoing letter, as it was dictated to me by our Father, MGR. DE LIGUORI.

After the original preserved in the archives of Father General at Rome.

LETTER 943.

To the Superior of the House at Ciorani.

He countermands the demolition of the cupola and insists on the necessity of obedience.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

NOCERA, November 4, 1779.

Reverend and Dear Father: I beg you to communicate to your entire Community the following remarks; for I believe them to be very necessary, and I do not wish to die with the scruple, not to have done all that I could in favor of good order.

In regard to the cupola, I have been anxious to hear and to examine at various intervals the reasons given by Signor Andrea; his plan appears to me to be well-conceived, more

useful, and less expensive to the house; I have, therefore, decided that the cupola should not be taken down.

I have asked Fathers Mazzini, Villani, Cimino and the other Consultors to examine all these reasons; and they are of my opinion.

I believed that after so many discussions and examinations I should meet with docility and obedience. But under one pretext or another, my command has not been heeded.

I have, therefore, resolved to make myself obeyed, cost what it may; for God commands this, the Catholic king, our sovereign, wishes it, and they have appointed me director and head of the four houses of the kingdom.

The want of obedience on the part of subjects has, in the past, caused me more than one vexation. I hope to experience nothing similar in the future; but, at all events, I am determined to employ the most proper and efficacious means to maintain obedience, as occasion may require. I wish to die a quiet death, and not to leave to the Congregation an example of unpunished disobedience.

In the meantime, I will ask our Lord to grant to all the spirit of obedience, and I request you all to recommend me to God.

Please let me know, dear Father, whether the stones are being prepared according to my order.

I have written concerning these matters to the Fathers who are on the mission at Cassano.

I bless you, dear Father, and all your subjects.

BROTHER ALFONSO MARIA,
Rector Major.

[*P. S.*] Last Wednesday, after dinner, I asked where you and Father Minister were. I was answered that you had both gone to Ciorani. I was very sorry to hear, that you had thus gone away without my blessing and in spite of the bad weather that was threatening; in fact, the rain soon began to fall.

You will please make known to all your subjects, to those who are at home and to those who are absent, that a long time ago, I issued for all the subjects of our houses, a general prohibition to leave the house of Nocera, without having previously asked my permission. I wish to know when the subjects leave, in order to be able to give them the necessary advice.

This is all I have to say. As regards the building at Ciorani, everything, it seems to me, has been well explained in my last letter. I hope soon to hear that obedience is being practised.

After the original preserved in the archives of Father General at Rome.

LETTER 944.

To Father Stefano Liguori, at Ciorani.

He exhorts him to preach obedience by word as he preaches it by example.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

NOCERA, November 6, 1779.

I have received your letter, and I see that the Fathers at Ciorani make very little of me and of my letters.

I pray to God to make them saints; but it seems to me that by showing so little respect for the Superior, charged with governing all the Neapolitan houses, they are not walking on the road that leads to sanctity. The Blessed Virgin, I hope, will make them see the error of their ways. As for yourself, my dear Father, you have obeyed me under the circumstances, and I bless you in a special manner.

I have taken counsel of experienced men, I have taken counsel of all the Consultors; could I have found better guarantees?

But, I see very well, the devil has shown his horns; it is

he that makes some act through passion and party-spirit. I did not countenance this party-spirit; and, if at the beginning I believed that the cupola could be taken down, it was because I was not well-informed.

Please, dear Father, say some good words to re-establish harmony in this house. This is the will of the king, our master, who has again appointed me Rector Major, as you may read in his last ordinance.

I give you my blessing. Make your companions read attentively the copy of the ordinance which the king (may God have him in his holy keeping) has sent to me.

BROTHER ALFONSO MARIA,
Rector Major.

After the original in possession of Mgr. Alfonso Giella, Prothonotary Apostolic at Castellammare.

LETTER 945.

To the Fathers of the Congregation in the Kingdom of Naples.

He warmly recommends to them the work of the crusade.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

[NOCERA DE' PAGANI, November 8, 1779.]

Alfonso Maria de Liguori, by the grace of God and of the Apostolic See Bishop and Rector Major of the Missionary Priests of the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer.

We cannot tell you with what joy, with what gladness, we received from the first secretariate of State a royal ordinance, confiding to us in the name of his Majesty a most honorable mission. The king formally enjoins upon us, and appeals to the zeal of all my dear confrères, to promote and sustain the grand work of the holy crusade, established in this kingdom by his Majesty for reasons indicated in this ordinance. For your guidance I append the text of the document:

"Monsignor: The incessant labors to which your Missionaries of the Most Holy Redeemer devote themselves, with a view to instruct the faithful and to persuade them to practise true piety and religion; the ardent zeal with which they spread everywhere the principles of sound morality, conducive to the formation of good citizens and good Christians, have attracted the attention of his Majesty, the king, and determined him to confide to them a mission; namely, that of promoting and valiantly sustaining a work, the only aim of which is the salvation of souls and the greatest good of the State, I mean the work of the Crusade. His Majesty, therefore, desires that your Lordship, in quality of Founder and Rector Major of these missionaries, should expressly charge them, in the name of the king, with explaining as often as they can, wherever they give missions, the indulgences and other graces enumerated in the Bull. They should at the same time announce to the faithful, the vassals of his Majesty, how our marine stands in need of an indispensable subsidy to repel the constant aggressions of the Mahometans, aggressions that inflict the greatest injury upon the Church and State.

"It is the intention of our sovereign, moreover, that your missionaries should not only preach about the Bull, but should also distribute it among the faithful. Your Lordship will please comply with the wish of his Majesty, by informing us on receipt of this decree, of the number of Bulls which you think your missionaries will be able to distribute. The Bulls will be sent opportunely by the royal depository of the *crociata*, Don Salvatore Carì.

"His Majesty has finally charged me to tell your Lordship that, in proportion to the happy results accomplished by the labors of your missionaries, he will not omit to show you in due time marks of his royal satisfaction.

"Such is, Monsignor, the communication that I was

ordered to forward to you in the name of the king. Your Lordship will find therein marked all that is needed for your guidance.—CASERTA, October 22, 1779.—The MARQUIS DELLA SAMBUCA."

You see, my dear Brethren, our very pious and very religious monarch, by intrusting to us this mission, charges us with a work that is in perfect conformity with the end of our Institute. This end has always been to teach the faithful their duties to God, to their prince, to their neighbor and to themselves. Now, how can such a result be better attained than by promoting the excellent work which our august sovereign had in view when he asked of His Holiness, Pope Pius VI., the privilege of this crusade for the benefit of his kingdom? See, in fact, the good results produced by the small, yet voluntary, offerings annually placed by the faithful into the royal hands. These offerings increase our maritime forces, and thus counteract the efforts of the pagans who have conspired to infest our shores continually; they thereby sustain the honor of our holy religion by removing from the faithful, our brethren, all danger of apostacy; they procure the peace and the tranquillity of the State; they protect property, liberty, the life of a multitude of our fellow-citizens; and what is more, they enable the faithful thus to pay off a great part of the debt contracted by their sins. Thanks to the superabundant merits of Jesus Christ, our Redeemer, and of the Blessed Virgin, our beloved Mother Mary, and of the other saints of heaven,—merits deposited in the inexhaustible treasure of the Church, which is at the disposition of the Roman Pontiff, they may free themselves from the temporal punishments which must be undergone either in this life or in Purgatory. In other words, they acquire an immense capital of indulgences, applicable either to the living by way of absolution, or to the dead by way of suffrage, without speaking of a large

number of privileges which are enjoyed by the contributors and which are contained in the summary of the Bull, which is distributed to each one.

So pious a work, which has for its principal aim the interest of religion and the welfare of the State, and the advantages of which are so considerable, should not be looked upon with indifference. We should, on the contrary, promote it with all our strength, since by our ministry we are obliged to defend the honor of God, to procure the good of the country, to promote charity towards our neighbor. We should do this with still greater zeal, since we are charged with a formal command by our own ruler.

For all these reasons, my very dear Brethren, you should propagate this work in all the provinces of the kingdom, as much as possible, and for this you should avail yourselves of the holy missions which the bishops ask you to give to the people confided to their care. You should not confine yourselves simply to publish and to explain the paragraphs of the Bull of the crusade; you should also announce in detail to the faithful the very just reasons which under present circumstances have induced his Majesty to procure for his people so extraordinary a benefit. You should make them understand how much the public and private interests are served by accepting a copy of the summary of the Bull of the crusade.

All the Superiors of our houses and the Superiors of the missions shall comply with the following regulations which we intimate to them in the name of the king. In all the missions that they preach to the people, in all the private retreats that they give in our houses, to whatever class of persons, they shall explain in a catechetical form, and as often as possible, the motives of Christian charity which oblige all the faithful to furnish their part of the subsidy required to augment our maritime forces. They shall

explain the Catholic teaching relative to the holy indulgences, and enumerate the other graces and privileges contained in the pontifical concession of the crusade. They shall make all understand that no one can participate in this beautiful work of Christian piety, gain the above-mentioned indulgences, and enjoy the privileges and favors announced, unless he procures every year the summary of the Bull which is distributed in the kingdom. One can, of course, obtain this summary at any time of the year preceeding the time mentioned, since the indulgences, graces, and privileges, of which mention is made, may always be gained from one Sunday of Septuagesima to the other.

We also wish that the foregoing explanations be given in our churches in which we preach every Sunday and every Saturday of the year. And on the missions it is not only the catechist, but also the preacher who should from time to time recall this good work to the minds of the faithful and recommend it.

But this is not sufficient. A counsel is ordinarily more efficacious, when it is given privately; all the confessors of the Congregation shall, therefore, endeavor to make all persons, who come to confession, take interest in this excellent work. They shall not, however, impose this upon them as a duty or an obligation.

For this purpose we wish, and in the name of the king we ordain, that every one shall procure from the Superior of the missions as many Bulls as he can distribute. He is to spread them among the faithful and promptly to collect the alms according to the tariff indicated in the published instructions,—a tariff fixed according to the various conditions of persons by the present Archbishop of Naples, Commissary General of the Crusade in the kingdom. He shall afterwards render an account to his Superior of the money that he has received, and shall, at the same time,

return the Bulls that he has not distributed. Every Superior of the missions shall also see that the Fathers observe exactly all that has been prescribed in the aforesaid instructions concerning the distribution of the Bulls, and shall render a detailed account of all to his local Superior.

Finally, the Superiors of our houses shall, every year, send us a detailed account of the alms collected, of the Bulls that remain to be distributed, and they shall transmit to us the money that they have received; we shall then forward it to the proper persons.

We know by experience, very dear Brethren in Jesus Christ, your promptness in executing our least orders, when there is question of the glory of God and the salvation of souls. As for the present regulations, you will, I hope, comply with them as quickly as possible, seeing that they are based on the orders of our sovereign. You certainly need no other incitements.

Our advanced age and our continual infirmities do not permit us to aid you in this great enterprise; but we can, at least, ask heaven for the necessary graces, and we continually pray to the Lord to bless your apostolic labors.

His Majesty, the king, having deigned to approve the regulations above-mentioned, we wish to make known to you the terms of this approbation. We cheerfully communicate to you the royal rescript which was recently addressed to us on this subject. It reads thus:

"Monsignor: His Majesty having taken cognizance of the detailed letter which your Lordship wrote to him on the 10th inst, has enjoined upon me the duty of manifesting to you his entire satisfaction for the solicitude that you display in favor of the holy work of the crusade, and he is pleased to approve the circular which your Lordship proposed to send to the Superiors of your four houses in the kingdom."

CASERTA, November 17, 1779.—The MARQUIS DELLA SAMBUCA."

ALFONSO MARIA DE LIGUORI,
Rector Major.

After the original preserved in the archives of Father General at Rome.

LETTER 946.

To Father Giovanni Battista Ansalone, Rector of the House at Iliceto.

Instruction as to the distribution of the Bulls of the crusade.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

NOCERA, November 19, 1779.

Reverend and Dear Father: You will receive from the Bishop of Bovino fifteen hundred copies of the Bull of the crusade, which, conformably to the orders of the king, our missionaries are to distribute.

Please accept them, give a receipt and note exactly the expenses for freight and delivery; for all these details must be transmitted to the Treasurer of the Crusade.

Our missionaries should spread these Bulls with all possible zeal, as well in the interest of souls, as in obedience to the formal order of our monarch (may God have him in his keeping); and in the name of the king, I impose this charge upon your Reverence and on all your subjects. You will shortly receive a circular which I have had printed, and which will serve to guide you in the distribution of these Bulls.

I bless you and all your companions.

BROTHER ALFONSO MARIA.

After the original preserved in the archives of Father General at Rome.

LETTER 947.

To Father Diodato Criscuoli, Rector of the House at Ciorani.

Absolute necessity of obedience.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

[NOCERA, December 8, 1779.]

. . . . I do not act through obstinacy; it is you who act through passion and party spirit.

I am the Rector Major and the head of the Congregation, as the king has but recently declared. It is, therefore, I alone who will decide, whether the cupola should be taken down. As for the rest of you, who are not Rector Majors, you have only to obey.

I exhort every one of you to have his eyes fixed upon the star of salvation; for, if obedience is no longer regarded, the Congregation will disappear, and there will remain only a place of discord. He that resists Superiors, declares himself an enemy of the Congregation.

But such is not our opinion, you will say.—In this case there are more heads than one, and everybody is master.

After all, it matters little; I am approaching the end of my life, and I hope to save my soul through the merits of Jesus Christ and of the Blessed Virgin; as for you, you will deplore the ruin of the Congregation when it will be too late to apply a remedy. Be, therefore, convinced that if the authority of the Rector Major is once destroyed, that of the local Rectors will also disappear at the same time, and the wicked will rejoice to see our work destroyed.

I bless you, my dear Father, and all the Fathers who are not Rector Majors.

Tannoia, Book iv., Chapter xiv.

LETTER 948.

To Father Bartolomeo Corrado.

He contradicts the rumors about changes introduced into the Rule.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

NOCERA, December 15, 1779.

I have received your letter and have weighed all its words. You do not imagine, I hope, that I wish to deceive you or to affirm what is false, or that I have lost all spirit, so as to permit the least change in the Rule.[1] I say no more about this matter.

If after that people refuse to believe me, what am I to do? I accept all this on account of my sins.

All these rumors cause me great pain; for I clearly see that it is the devil that spreads them to create trouble in our ranks. I repeat, and affirm on my conscience, that nothing is being done against the Rule or against the observance that is in vigor in the Congregation. If you do not wish to believe me, I can only say that we must have patience.

Tannoia, Book iv., Chapter xix.

[1] In fact, would to God that no change had been introduced into the Rule! St. Alphonsus knew absolutely nothing about this; he could not have even the slightest suspicion, as he had given no orders to this effect. But Providence wished that the saint should be tried even in his old age, and that his last days should be a real martyrdom; it, therefore, permitted a strange abuse of confidence, to which he could not at first give credence.

LETTER 949.

To Father Antonio Tannoia, at Iliceto.

The same subject.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

NOCERA, December 17, 1779.

My dear Don Antonio: The devil is raising a great commotion, in order to destroy the Congregation.

Father Cimino and I have thought that you might be of some service by coming here; please come then as soon as possible.

This is all that I have to say to you. I bless you and remain . . .

BROTHER ALFONSO MARIA,
Rector Major.

[*P. S.*] Among other things the devil has made some of our Fathers, even of the house at Iliceto, believe that Fathers Cimino and Maione wished to change the Rule and to destroy the Institute.

Tell every one that this is false, a thing altogether false; in a word, I assure you, it is truly a lie. How could I in conscience ever permit that the Institute should be destroyed or that a change of the Rule should be introduced?

After the original preserved in the archives of our house at Pagani.

LETTER 950.

To the Fathers of the House, at Iliceto.

He requests them to distrust rumors.—Necessity of obedience.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

NOCERA DE' PAGANI, December 26, 1779.

My Brethren, I take a thousand precautions, whenever I wish to assure myself of the truth of a fact; and you give credit to the first rumors that are spread! Please, then, in future do not credit all the rumors that you hear.

I have learned that some among you have begun to reason about obedience. Do not touch this virtue, I entreat you, and submit to the Superiors; for, if obedience is lost, the Congregation will be ruined.

When you know that I have said a thing, or that I have written it in a letter bearing my seal, I wish you to obey. In order to act otherwise you must recognize the falsity of the fact with a certitude that will permit you to affirm it under oath. Meanwhile, obey.[1] (*Some words are here wanting.*) I will severely punish those that will not submit. On this condition I bless you.

BROTHER ALFONSO MARIA.

After the original preserved in the archives of Father General at Rome.

[1] According to this letter it would appear that certain insubordinate subjects took advantage of the saint's advanced age to evade his orders and to disregard them. According to their view, what was said in his name in his letters and signed by his hand, was not his thought, but that of his counsellors. But this was a great mistake. There was no doubt that the saint had no longer the energy of mature age; but his admirable correctness of judgment remained the same, and all those that approached him, looked upon it as a miracle that a man worn out by years, by infirmities, and by labors

LETTER 951.

To Marquis Domenico Antonio di Avena, Counsellor of the Royal Chamber of S. Chiara, at Naples.

He gives him the reasons why he dismissed a subject from the Congregation.

J. M. J.

NOCERA DE' PAGANI, January 14, 1780.

Your Excellency: I have received the letter which you have done me the honor of writing to me in favor of N., whom I dismissed, some months ago, from the Congregation.

The following are the reasons why such a measure was taken:

For about four years this subject lived outside of the Congregation to attend to certain civil and criminal suits regarding his family. This was unbecoming an ecclesiastic; and, moreover, though he had two other brothers, who could have occupied themselves with these lawsuits, he never wished to intrust these to their care.

In the second place, in consequence of so long a stay outside of the Congregation, his fervor had greatly cooled. I also received many complaints from persons outside, who informed me of his conduct quite opposed to our state; and, finally, after having several times invited him to return to the Institute, he refused to obey.

All these reasons, your Excellency, induced me to decide upon the measure of which I have spoken, and I decided upon it after having consulted several of my companions. The latter told me, that I could not in conscience suffer such a subject to remain any longer in the Congregation, and that I should at once protect the honor of the latter

of every kind, should have lost nothing of his lucidity of mind and of his rare prudence.

and obey the order of the king, our sovereign, who desires that the members of the Institute serve the interests of their neighbor by giving missions and exercises of piety.

Notwithstanding all that, when he presented your Excellency's letter, I begged him to return to the novitiate and to remain there for some time, in order to acquire again a little of the spirit of devotion. He answered me that his good name would then be ruined.

I finally suggested to him, that he withdraw to our house at Caposele to occupy himself there with the affairs of his soul. He answered, that he wished to live at Nocera, because he was obliged from time to time to frequent the tribunals of the capital about another suit that remained to be finished. You see, your Excellency, what impertinence!

I have, therefore, made up my mind to dismiss him if he does not obey; and I believe that you would be of the same opinion.

The bearer of this letter will have the honor of making known to you more in detail the conduct of this Father.

Meanwhile I recommend myself to your prayers, and I beg you to accept the expression of my profound respect. Your very devoted and grateful servant,

ALFONSO MARIA DE LIGUORI, *Bishop.*

After the Neapolitan edition of 1848.

LETTER 952.

To Father Gasparo Caione, Rector of the House at Benevento.

He announces to him some important work of the ministry and recommends other grave matters.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

NOCERA, January 25, 1780.

The Archbishop of Salerno [1] has sent me word that he, by all means, wishes to have you to give the retreat to the clergy of Salerno; it is to be given during Passion week.

It was altogether impossible for me to refuse; for, under the present circumstances, we stand absolutely in need of the favors of his Grace. Please, then, do all that you can to be free at this time.

I have learned that Father de Meo wishes to have you for the retreat to be given to the soldiers at Naples; but write to Father de Meo that such a thing is impossible, this year, on account of this previous engagement.

If afterwards the Cardinal [2] wishes to employ you at Benevento, try to let him know beforehand that I must positively send you to Salerno during Passion week, and ask him in my name not to put me at variance with the Archbishop of Salerno. In fact, I have given the latter the formal promise, and we should, by all means, avoid displeasing him.

I will now ask you to do another thing.

Please see to it that your Fathers go out on missions; at least, send them alternately in company with other Fathers. It is not well that these young men thus remain at a fixed post. They will lose all energy, if made to stay at Benevento, unless you send them on missions. And, in order to replace

[1] Mgr. Sanchez de Luna.

[2] Cardinal Banditi, Archbishop of Benevento.

them, try to have Fathers come from Sant' Angelo, who are not engaged; or, rather, write to Caposele (you may even use my name); for this change of subjects between Benevento and our other houses of the kingdom, is necessary for various reasons.

I foresee that the devil will make strenuous efforts this year to create the greatest possible division among us. Have, therefore, recited every evening the short prayers marked on the leaf enclosed. Begin, then, the first evening of the month of February, and continue them till the end of May, that is, for the space of four months.[1]

Please, my dear Father, answer me in regard to all the points of which I have spoken. I bless you and all the Fathers.

BROTHER ALFONSO MARIA,
Rector Major.

After the original preserved in the archives of Father General at Rome.

1 The saint, we have already said, knew nothing of the changes that had been introduced at Naples into the Rule of his Institute. He even contradicted all the rumors that were spread on this subject. But in the month of February the mystery was cleared up; in the month of March a *Regolamento* (mutilated Rule) was imposed upon the Congregation, absolutely contrary to the Rule approved by the Holy See; in the month of May a Chapter assembled at Pagani which, instead of pacifying the minds of the Fathers, embittered them still more. There was, therefore, something prophetic in the foresight of the saint, when he ordained prayers in anticipation of so many troubles.

LETTER 953.

To Father Bartolomeo Mattia Corrado, at Naples.

Regarding the *Regolamento.*

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

NOCERA, March 3 [1780].

As the weather was so bad all day yesterday, I suppose you were not able to do anything. I should like you to pay a visit some morning or afternoon to Cantore, and, if possible, also to Vecchietti, and endeavor to show them that the measures introduced by one of our Fathers, whose name I need not mention,[1] are not trifles, but serious matters that undermine the very government of the Congregation.

This Father has arrogated to himself the right to expel subjects, even the priests. He, moreover, wishes that the subjects transfer all their revenues to the Congregation, a measure to which they are opposed, and, lastly, he has introduced various regulations that are objectionable to the Fathers. The members of the Congregation in all our houses are highly incensed at these proceedings, and some of them, perhaps, are thinking of abandoning the Institute, if things go on in this way. Cantore should tell all this to the Marquis de Marco, and he will then reject the extravagances of Maione.

Father Cimino is here. I had a talk with him last evening, and I trust I have brought him around. Let us leave all to God. I expect to hear from you by Saturday.

I wanted to send you twenty ducats for the time being, intending to send more later on; but I have no one by whom to send them. If you can find anyone who will lend you what money you need, I will pay you all when you

[1] He alludes to Father Maione and the modifications introduced by him into the Rule.

come to see me. Meanwhile I give you my blessing and remain . . .

To-morrow I expect the Fathers from Calabria.

BROTHER ALFONSO MARIA,
Rector Major.

After an old copy.

LETTER 954.

To the Same.

Grief of the saint at the sight of the changes introduced into the Rule.

NOCERA, March 10, 1780.

My dear Father Bartolomeo: I am in danger of becoming demented.

I have seen the new *Regolamento*, the work of Father Maione; it is entirely contrary to my views.

The young Fathers here are creating a commotion about it.

I beg you to leave everything to come to see me, if you do not wish to hear that I have lost my senses and have died of apoplexy.

Tannoia, Book iv., Chapter xix.

LETTER 955.

To the Same.

He asks him to take steps to repair the evil occasioned by the *Regolamento*.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

NOCERA, March 13, 1780.

My dear Father Bartolomeo: You see that our Congregation is near destruction; you should, therefore, do your utmost to come to its assistance.

I send you enclosed a petition with a letter addressed to Marquis de Marco. Carry it to him yourself and inform him of everything.

You must speak plainly, otherwise Father Maione will work underhand.

You must tell the Marquis that Father Maione wished to increase the powers of the Consultors, because he is a Consultor himself; that in a number of points he has annihilated the power of the Rector Major, and that such a slight of my authority now prevents my companions from showing me any respect.

You must one of these days and as soon as possible, go to the Marquis; tell him that I have not lost my mind, as Father Maione would like to persuade him that I have. I have still my senses, though this Father is trying to make me lose them.

I also send you a petition to the king; it should be presented to his Majesty by Marquis de Marco.

Besides, do not forget to carry the enclosed letter to the Grand Almoner, and tell him all.

I bless you.

BROTHER ALFONSO MARIA,
Rector Major.

After the original preserved in the archives of Father General at Rome.

LETTER 956.

To the Same.

He revokes the power of attorney given to Father Maione and transmits it to Father Corrado.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

[NOCERA, March 13, 1780.]

By the terms of the present power of attorney, I the undersigned, Mgr. Alfonso de Liguori, Bishop and Rector

Major of the Congregation of the Missionary Fathers of the Most Holy Redeemer, established in the kingdom of Naples, make known to all concerned that a certain number of months ago (I cannot precisely determine how long ago it was) I drew up a power of attorney in favor of Father Angelo Maione, a member of this Congregation of Missionaries. I thus appointed him my general, as well as my special, agent for the affairs mentioned in this power of attorney, and for whatever other business in my department, as appears from the said act, signed by the notary, Giovanni de Novi of Angri.

But, at present, I have no need of the person called Father Angelo Maione to watch over and to defend, according to justice, any of the interests and rights of the aforesaid Congregation; for I am absolutely opposed to whatever he may plead, for whatever reason, before any tribunal, be it even the supreme, ecclesiastical or secular tribunal; and I wish that all in said Congregation should live as quietly as possible. I, therefore, by these presents revoke, rescind, and annul the aforesaid power of attorney, made in favor of the above-mentioned Father Angelo Maione, and I desire that, in future and perpetually, this power of attorney be regarded as never having existed and as never having constituted Father Angelo Maione to be my agent.

On the other hand, knowing well the fitness of Reverend Father Bartolomeo Corrado, of the same Congregation, and the affection he feels for this Institute, considering him also as present, notwithstanding his absence, I appoint and constitute him my ordinary and certain agent for myself and for said Congregation, with the clause *invested with full powers and holding the place of my own self* [*ad votum, et ut alter ego*], in order that he may be able, in the first place: to make Father Angelo Maione give up his office of agent, and that he may declare to be null every act, written

agreement, or appeal addressed by him, or, at his instance, addressed to any judge or magistrate, whoever he may be, even to his royal Majesty (whom God may have in his keeping). In the second place: that the said Father Corrado may appear in my name, and in the name of the said Congregation, before any tribunal, even before the supreme tribunal, whether ecclesiastical or secular, and even before the royal throne, to plead in my favor, and in favor of this Congregation; consequently to present for this purpose every kind of appeal, documents and petitions, to refute the acts of the same kind, presented or prepared by the party of the other side, and to examine even the sworn testimonies of our adversaries; in a word, to do and to conclude all that I could do and conclude myself, if I were personally occupied with these affairs. I promise also to regard as valid and binding all that he will do, and for this I pledge all the property of the Congregation, whatever it may be.

NOCERA DE' PAGANI, the thirteenth of March, one thousand seven hundred and eighty (1780).

I, ALFONSO DE LIGUORI, *Rector Major*, appoint the agent as above designated.

I, DOMENICO TORTORA, am a witness.

I, DIOMEDE TORTORA, am a witness.

All done in my presence. In testimony whereof I have placed thereto my hand and seal: HYACINTHO PEPE of Nocera, *Notary*.

L. ✠ *S.*

After an authentic copy.

LETTER 957.

To the Same.

He notifies him of his appointment.

Praised be Jesus and Mary!

NOCERA, March 13, 1780.

My dear Father, To-day I received the following piece of information. Hearing of the opposition made by the Fathers of the Congregation who will not accept the new *Regolamento*, Father Maione, by virtue of the Procuratorship which I confided to him, intends to go to the king, and in my name demand the expulsion of all the Fathers who do not want to receive the new Rule. While there was still time, I summoned a notary and revoked absolutely the power of Procurator given to Maione, constituting yourself, my dear Father, in this capacity. As an assistant I send you Father Gallo, with whom you will confer, and to whom I have given full powers. Pray for me.

With affection,

BROTHER ALFONSO MARIA,
Rector Major.

After the original in possession of Rev. Father Spoos, C. SS. R.

LETTER 958.

To Father Diodato Criscuoli, Rector at Ciorani, on a Mission at Castrovillari.

He informs him of a measure that he has taken, and asks for prayers.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

NOCERA, March 16, 1780.

I do not know, how I escaped a hemorrhage, after all this excitement that has been so long agitating the minds of the members of the Congregation.

When Father Maione learned, that neither I nor any one in the Institute wished to have the new *Regolamento*, composed by him and not by the king, he formed the plan of having recourse to the sovereign, that the latter should ordain the immediate dismissal of any one that would not accept this *Regolamento*.

Thank God, I heard of this fine project in time, and at once revoked the power of attorney granted by me to Father Maione. I wrote to Father Corrado to extinguish the conflagration that this Father will enkindle on this occasion. I trust that this blaze will be smothered.

In the meantime, I beg you and your Fathers to return to Ciorani, if you have not begun another mission; and if you have begun a mission, return as soon as it is finished.

Begin a novena to the Blessed Virgin of nine *Aves* and *Glorias*, that this good Mother may prevent any evil.

I am losing no time in applying a remedy; but it is the Blessed Virgin who must intervene.

Have prayers said also by others, but never mention a word about the troubles that agitate the Congregation; and call upon me at Nocera as soon as you can. For the

present, it is not necessary that others should accompany you. Ask our Lord to grant me resignation.

I bless you, my dear Father, and all your subjects.

BROTHER ALFONSO MARIA,
Rector Major.

After the original in possession of the priest Alphonsus Boone, Superior of the College of St. Louis, at Menin, diocese of Bruges, Belgium.

LETTER 959.

To Father Angelo Maione, at Naples.

He pardons all the wrong that he has done and entreats him to return to the house at Ciorani.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

[NOCERA, March 20, 1780.]

I write you this letter at the foot of the crucifix. It is also at the foot of the crucifix that I beg you to prostrate yourself during these days on which this good Master gave his life for the love of us.[1]

My dear Angelo, let us forget the past, and let us trample under foot all that has happened.

I entreat you to return to the house at Ciorani; and if this house does not please you, choose any other you may think fit.

Rest assured that for my part, I will love you as before; you will learn this by experience. You will remain Consultor as in the past, and you will give your opinion in all the important affairs of the Congregation.

As for your honor, leave it to me; it will be my constant care to defend it before every one, before confrères and strangers.

1 The 20th of March of this year was Monday in Holy Week.

Let us, therefore, remain tranquil, I beg you by the wounds of our Lord.

I have nothing else to tell you; take counsel of the Blessed Sacrament, and then answer me whenever you choose to do so.

I bless you. May our Lord deign to fill you with his holy love, and give you the grace to belong entirely to him.

Tannoia, Book iv., Chapter xx.

LETTER 960.

To Father Bartolomeo Mattia Corrado.

Reasons why he treated Father Maione with kindness.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

[NOCERA, March 20, 1780.]

I thought it my duty to treat Father Maione most kindly; this is the wish of Jesus Christ, and thus he inspires me to act.

I have written him a letter full of kindness, begging him for the love of Jesus Christ to forget the past. This is the way I intend to act, until it may please the Lord to establish peace among us.

I begged Father Maione to return to Ciorani, or to choose any house he pleases.

This manner of acting certainly pleases Jesus Christ, and I hope thus to obtain peace and everything else.

We must have patience and recommend ourselves to Jesus Christ and also to Mary, the Mother of peace. . . .

Tannoia, Book iv., Chapter xx.

LETTER 961.

To Father Diodato Criscuoli, Rector of the House at Ciorani.

He points out to him the means of removing the difficulties caused by the new *Regolamento*.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

NOCERA, March 28, 1780.

In reading the new *Regolamento*, approved by his Majesty (whom may God preserve), I noticed various difficulties, which were, besides, pointed out to me by many of our abler subjects, and in regard to which opinions have been nearly unanimous in all our houses.

After having considered and leisurely weighed these difficulties, I have found them serious and important. I, therefore, believe that it will be necessary that they should be maturely and seriously examined by a certain number of subjects.

For this end I have ordained that there be chosen in each of our four houses two of the most capable subjects. After having well studied the questions, they should deliberate together as to what should be decided upon.

I hope, then, to have recourse again to our sovereign, in order that the work of the missions (so highly recommended and protected by the king), may, before my death, be organized in the best possible way. I will, at the same time, ask that a practical rule be made for our apostolic labors, and that proper measures be taken to assure the good government of our Congregation of Missionaries.

There is here question of the service of God and of his Majesty. Please, therefore, read this letter to all the Fathers of your house; then let them choose from among them the two priests who are most capable and edifying. Later on, it will be made known to the latter at what time they

should meet here for the purpose which I mentioned. The time, I hope, will be towards the end of April.

I bless you, dear Father, and all your subjects.

BROTHER ALFONSO MARIA,
Rector Major.

After the original preserved in the archives of Father General at Rome.

LETTER 962.

To his Nephews Giuseppe and Alfonso de Liguori, at the College of Nobles at Naples.

He gives them wise counsels to incite them to virtue and the love of study.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

NOCERA DE' PAGANI, April 4, 1780.

It is a miracle of God's goodness, that he still allows me to live, that I may weep over my sins.

I expected to see you here [1] to give you my last blessing and my last counsels, but God has refused me this consolation, which I do not merit; praised be his holy name forever!

I bless you, then, at a distance, and I do so with all my heart. I pray to God to bless you from heaven on high, and to instil his holy fear into your young hearts. May he also grant you his love, but a love that may endure till death, and that may lead you to that happy eternity, where I will expect you, if the Lord be merciful to me.

Strive to fear God as your Master, but still more to love him as your Father. Father! how sweet a name, and this you give him every day in the Lord's Prayer, when you say, *Our Father.*

Yes, God is indeed your Father; love him, then, with

[1] The saint expected them at Nocera de' Pagani during the Easter holidays.

tenderness. He is your Father, and what a Father! his goodness, his sweetness, his love, his tenderness, his beneficence, his mercy, are so many titles which should make you love him with a tender and filial affection. Happy shall you be if you love him from your tenderest years. His yoke will appear to you not hard, but sweet; his holy laws will have for you only charms, and by subduing your inordinate passions, you will learn to triumph over the enemies of your souls. This good habit will, by degrees, be strengthened in you; and you will find easy and sweet what the slaves of vice find painful and difficult.

Love God, my dear children. I call you my children, because I love you with all the tenderness of a father and also because I wish holy charity to increase in your soul.

Love, therefore, my dear children, Jesus Christ, our Lord and God; love him much, and watch over this love with a jealous zeal, and fear that you may lose it. How great a loss is the loss of the love of God, of his grace and of his friendship, thus incurring his indignation and vengeance!

Do you wish to avoid this evil? Be humble.

He that is humble, flees from the danger; in involuntary temptations he has recourse to God with confidence, and he thus preserves divine love. On the contrary, he that is proud, easily falls into sin and into disgrace with the Lord.

Without humility, either you will never do anything truly good, for want of sincere and solid virtue, or you will lose virtue very easily.

God resists the proud; as for the humble, he treats them with mercy; he regards them with favor; he makes them his true friends.

You will not be proud if you consider your own miseries, for, in your own interior, you will find motives for always humbling yourselves. You belong to an honorable family; but this is a gift of God. You are at a college directed by

zealous and watchful masters, who join to an illustrious birth, great and admirable virtues; prudent, enlightened, exemplary professors give you a good education; but this is also a benefit which you receive from God. In a word, all the good that you have, you have received from the Lord; and if you are, more than others, indebted to the divine goodness, you have no reason to be proud.

Consider, afterwards, your personal faults (for they are entirely your own), in them you will find matter for continual self-humiliation. Obey your masters with love and gratitude, as very humble children, for whether they instruct and encourage you, or whether they reprimand you, they always bear towards you in everything the charitable affection of their hearts; and even their reproofs, however disagreeable they may be, are the fruit of the love that these good religious cherish in your regard.

Obey them as so many fathers; for your father has intrusted you to their care and invested them with his own authority. Obey them, respect them, love them as you have to respect and love and obey your own father. I am confident that you will do so, to please God, your father and myself.

I have, however, learned with pain that you apply yourselves very little to study. O my children! if you only knew what wrong you are doing! Ignorance and sloth are fruitful sources of sin and of vice. Study, then, with attention, with diligence, with ardor, that you may know God, his benefits, his rewards, to think much of him and to love him ardently.

He that is ignorant knows neither God nor his benefits, or he knows them but little; neither does he know his own obligations and duties; this is the reason why he does evil.

Study, then, and afford me the consolation of hearing before my death, that you are profiting by my counsels.

I have reached the end of my days, and I know not

whether you will ever see me again. May these last recommendations remain engraved on your young hearts and may they produce the fruit that I desire!

Read this long letter attentively, ask for an explanation of the passages that you do not understand, and impress it deeply on your memory, in order that you may put these recommendations in practice.

Cherish a tender love for God. Study to know this great and amiable Master, in order to love him always more and more. Preserve in your hearts this holy love by means of humility. Obey with docility, with affection, your Superiors and your father; keep the rules of the college, in order to please God; finally, be devout to the Blessed Virgin, under whose tutelage and patronage I leave you, and to whom I shall always recommend you.

I bless you in our Lord, in order that you may belong to him for time and eternity. Amen.

Give my regards to Father Rector and to all the other Fathers who are with you at the college; tell them that I sincerely thank them for the care they take of you. I again bless you.

Your very affectionate uncle,

ALFONSO MARIA DE LIGUORI, *Bishop.*

After two original copies, one preserved in the chapel of the convent of the Capuchin Fathers at Vasto-Aimone, archdiocese of Chieti, the other in possession of his Eminence Cardinal Guglielmo Sanfelice, Archbishop of Naples.

LETTER 963.

To Father Gasparo Caione, Rector of the House at Benevento.

He condemns the new *Regolamento*.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

NOCERA, April 7, 1780.

Do me the pleasure, my dear Father, of attentively examining the points that Father Maione has changed in our Rule.

This Rule was examined by Mgr. Falcoia, who was a holy man and worked miracles; it was afterwards revised by Cardinal Spinelli, and finally approved by Benedict XIV.

Now I see it entirely changed. I do not understand, how the present *Regolamento* can be preferred to it. It is not the work of the king, nor of his secretary, but of Father Maione. The latter may have had a good intention; but I cannot call such a change the work of God.

As for myself, I am approaching eternity, I am eighty-four years of age; I have not long to live; my principal care is to die at the feet of Jesus crucified.

Tannoia, Book iv., Chapter xx.

LETTER 964.

To Father Isidoro Leggio,[1] at Frosinone.

He tries to calm the disquietude of the houses in the Pontifical States, and draws up rules to be followed for the election of a deputy to the Chapter.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

NOCERA, April 12, 1780.

I have received your letter.

Be firmly attached to the old Rules; they were com-

[1] Father Isidoro Leggio was born on the 14th of December 1737, at S. Angelo in Fasanella, diocese of Capaccio. He entered the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer in 1755, and made his profession, June 3, of the following year, into the hands of Father Tannoia, the Master of novices. His unusual talents obtained for him success in the apostolic ministry; he was also successful as a writer, as is proved by two works which he composed; one of which is entitled: "The Man of Science recalled to his Duties by the Light of Sound Philosophy"; the other "The Priest in Retreat occupied with his Own Duties." Father Leggio was living at Frosinone, when the famous *Regolamento* appeared. The Congregation soon found itself divided into two camps, and Father Francesco Antonio de Paola, appointed by the Sovereign Pontiff President of the houses of the Pontifical States, chose Father Leggio to be the Procurator-General. The latter by reason of his office found himself greatly involved in the negotiations that were carried on; for St. Alphonsus and the Fathers of the kingdom of Naples made great efforts with the Sacred Congregation of Bishops and Regulars to obtain a reunion and to recover all the privileges granted by the Holy See. That Father Leggio, far from seconding these efforts at reunion, tried on the contrary to thwart them, the Fathers of the kingdom and St. Alphonsus himself never entertained the least doubt. However, we have not here to discuss this question. It is certain that the Holy See wished, before all, in its successive refusals to the petitions for reunion, to combat the incredible pretensions of a laic government that was intermeddling with the affairs of the Church.

As for Father Leggio, it is but just to admit, that in 1790, when

posed not by me but by the saintly Mgr. Falcoia,[1] and by means of them the Congregation has maintained itself ever since.

This Congregation the devil wishes to annihilate; but I see that Jesus Christ is protecting us.

Tell your companions to ask God unceasingly, that the Institute may remain such as it was at the beginning.

Certain things may be changed, in order not to infringe upon the rights of the king; but as for the interior government, I hope that we shall always observe the same Rules.

Satan had thrown everything into confusion; but the Blessed Virgin has come to my assistance, and efforts are being made to restore things to the condition in which they were before.

Be, therefore, without disquietude. To maintain all the rules of the Pope, for example the vows, is not possible; for the king does not wish to hear anything about vows; but the oath of obedience will be taken, and this oath will sufficiently maintain the old rules regarding the interior government without infringing on any of the king's rights.

I have been in affliction for a while; but now I am

King Ferdinand IV. permitted the Fathers of the kingdom to observe their Rule and to lay aside the *Regolamento*, he was one of the most ardent promotors of reunion. He even had the honor of assisting, in his quality of Consultor, at the General Chapter which in 1793, elected Father Pietro Paolo Blasucci Rector Major of the whole Congregation. Later on in 1798, he became Bishop of Umbriatico; he died three years afterwards.

[1] It has been seen in the first pages of this Correspondence in what esteem St. Alphonsus held Mgr. Falcoia and what dependence he professed in his regard. It is not astonishing, therefore, that he should attribute to him the honor of everything that was done, particularly the composition of the Rule—a composition in which the holy Bishop of Castellammare had, no doubt, considerable share.

happy, for I see that the Lord is aiding us. Let all recommend me to Jesus Christ.

I bless the Rector and all his subjects.

BROTHER ALFONSO MARIA,
Rector Major.

[*P. S.*] In order that everything may be done by common consent, send the subject chosen by your Community and him who has been elected at Scifelli.

I desire that there should be only one Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer and not two. If some minor points have been changed, in order to obey the king, the matter is of little importance. The essential thing is, that the interior government of the Congregation remains the same as before.

A word more. Please tell the Rector of your house that the election, of which I have spoken, should take place without delay and in accordance with canon law; he should assemble for this purpose all the Fathers of the house, having previously mentioned to them the day fixed for the election.

The subject in question should be elected by secret votes; once elected he should take with him the act of election duly legalized; he should also be provided with ample faculties.

As for the absent Fathers, your Father Rector should write to them, asking them, either to have themselves represented by proxy, or to renounce their vote.

Be so kind, dear Father, as to communicate these counsels to Father Landi for the house at Scifelli; and do not fail to do so.

I again bless you.

After the original preserved in the house of the Redemptorist Fathers at Dongen, Holland.

LETTER 965.

To Father Giovanni Battista Ansalone, Rector of the House at Iliceto.

He requests him to send to Nocera two Fathers chosen by the Community.—Rules of election.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

NOCERA, April 12, 1780.

Send hither as soon as possible, the two Fathers chosen by your Community to settle the difficulties, or rather, to confirm the old Rule; otherwise our adversaries will say, that our Congregation is destroyed by internal dissensions.

However, if I mistake not, every one is of opinion that the ancient Rule should be maintained, and that there should not be two Congregations.

I bless you, dear Father, and all your subjects.

BROTHER ALFONSO MARIA,
Rector Major.

[*P. S.*] A word more. The election of the two subjects, of which I have spoken, should take place with all the requisite formalities, and everything should be avoided that might make it null and void. The subjects elected should take with them the act of their election duly legalized. Mention should be made of the fact that full powers have been conferred upon them.

As for the absent Fathers, be so kind as to write to them; tell them the day of the election, and request them to select a representative or to renounce their vote; for voting by letter is null, though it be secretly done. I again bless you.

After the original preserved in the archives of Father General at Rome.

LETTER 966.

To a Father of the Congregation at Naples.

Measures taken by the saint to combat the fatal effects of the *Regolamento*.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

NOCERA, April 12, 1780.

I have learned that our *friend*[1] has probably used one of my blank signatures, in order to obtain from the king things of which I did not dream.

I have written to the Grand Almoner, asking him to grant you an audience; but you should be accompanied by Father Gallo.[2] After the letter that I have written to him, the Grand Almoner will, I hope, listen to you most kindly.

Make known to him the whole plan of Father Maione; tell him that, in order to give more authority to the Consultors, this Father has sought not only to despoil the Rector Major of all his powers, but has put into the *Regolamento*, composed by him and not by me, whatever he pleased. Add that all the confrères are complaining, and that for this reason I am trying to obtain a new decree from the king.

You must speak plainly and forcibly, and tell him that

[1] Father Maione.

[2] The general catalogue of the Congregation has the following notice concerning this Father: "In the year of our Lord 1748, on Saturday, January 20, the deacon Don Salvatore Gallo of Monteforte, diocese of Avellino, of about twenty-three years of age, was admitted to the novitiate. He made his profession into the hands of our Father Rector Major on January 17, 1749, having been ordained priest on the Ember days of the preceding December. He died in the odor of sanctity on June 4, 1792, in the house of S. Michele de' Pagani, at the age of sixty-eight years, ten months and four days. He had spent in the Congregation forty-four years, four months and fifteen days."

Father Maione wishes to obtain a new decree, by virtue of which, whoever refuses to accept the *Regolamento*, shall be expelled, and that for this purpose Father Maione will use one of my blank signatures.

I send you a letter for Don Giuseppe Cantore.[1] He will, I hope, attentively listen to you, and lend you his assisttance.

I send you twenty-five ducats. Try to divide them the best way you can between Cantore and Vecchietti. The present to be made to them should consist of sweetmeats; the best would be, in my opinion, to choose chocolate. Do, however, as you please.

I regret to hear that Father Maione is able to distribute much money, thanks to certain persons who are favorably disposed towards him. I tell you this that you may know it.

If you desire to say orally to Cantore and Vecchietti that I will not be ungrateful in their regard, say so to them; in case you should think this inexpedient, keep silent about it.

It seems to me to be of the greatest importance to convey to the Grand Almoner the information that Father Maione, to strengthen his authority, has tried to despoil me of mine. In the course of conversation, let him also know the state of our Institute. Tell him, among other things, that we have upwards of one hundred young men, who have finished their Dogmatic Theology, and who, if they presented themselves at the Sorbonne or at Louvain, would make a good showing; but Father Maione, to obtain his own ends, wishes to see all these beautiful expectations frustrated.

Let me know, whether you desire a letter for Vecchietti. I send you a power of attorney, which revokes the old one, and in which I authorize the new agent to collect the annual

[1] One of the first officials of the royal secretariate.

pension from the College [of Doctors] and for the chaplaincy of Ciceri.

I also send you the revocation of all blanks that bear my signature. All these revocations should be sent to Father Corrado.

Here are the terms in which I have thought of drawing up a petition to the king, with a view of having the Grand Almoner to correct the *Regolamento*, composed by Father Maione for his own personal ends:

"Sire:—All the Fathers of our Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer have deemed it necessary, in order to secure the tranquillity of the subjects and the good government of the Congregation, upon which your Majesty has imposed a *Regolamento* to make the following declarations: . . . . . For this reason I, the undersigned, Rector Major of this Congregation and very faithful vassal of your Majesty, beg you to deign to intrust the examination of these declarations to Mgr. the Grand Almoner, who will afterwards submit them to the approbation of your Majesty."

I have also learned that our *friend* wished by means of a false petition, that is, by one of my blank signatures, to have the king order me to expel any one that rejects the *Regolamento*. In a word, he wishes to make me the executioner of my brethren.

Brother Alfonso Maria.

After the original preserved in the archives of Father General at Rome.

LETTER 967.

To Father Amelio Ficocelli,[1] at Frosinone.

Principal points in which the *Regolamento* differs from the old Rule.—To adopt it is to destroy the Congregation.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

[NOCERA, April 16, 1780.]

Father Maione by his writing nearly destroyed the Congregation, for he has completely spoilt the old Rule.

Here are some of the alterations that he has made:

1. The old Rule prohibited the preaching of Lenten sermons, which is so injurious to the missions.

2. By virtue of the old Rule, the Rector Major alone could dismiss subjects, but with the consent of the majority or sounder part of the Consultors. In the new, the Consultors can, if they have the majority, dismiss every one, even priests.

3. Before, the Consultors had only a decisive vote for the reception of young men who had not yet received Orders; the new rule confers this vote upon them for the reception of subdeacons and even of priests.

4. Under the old Rule the Consultors could, without permission, write only to the subjects of the Congregation; in the new, they can write even to outsiders.

5. Under the old Rule subjects possessing revenues could bestow them upon their families or give them to the Congregation; by the new they are positively obliged to give them to the Institute.

6. Under the old Rule the subjects could acquire benefices in property, provided they did not use the fruit thereof; in the new, they must give them to the Congregation; and

[1] This Father had made his profession on April 3, 1764. He unfortunately left the Institute after seventeen years of religious life.

this disposition applies to everything that they can receive in whatever manner it may be.

7. Formerly, the General Chapter had to be held every nine years, to reform abuses and to make new constitutions when necessary; at present, it has none of these faculties.

8. Formerly, after the death of the Rector Major a Vicar-General had to be appointed, who was charged to govern for the space of six months only; at present, the Vicar-General must govern until the new Rector Major has been elected.

9. As regards the jurisdiction of the bishops, it was formerly established that they are to be obeyed only in what concerns the apostolic ministry. At present, both temporal and spiritual affairs are subject to them; so that the bishops may now, in whatever way, go so far as to interfere in the interior government of the Institute.

10. Before, there were vows. At present, the king of Naples, if he does not admit vows, admits the oath. But Father Maione decides that no point of the Rule obliges under sin. How can this be so, since there is an oath?

Other points have attracted the attention of the confrères. I omit them, so as to confine myself to this simple consideration: to abandon the old Rule is to destroy the Congregation. There would, in fact, be two Congregations, one for the Romagna, the other for Naples; now, if there are two Congregations, the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer no longer exists.

If there were nothing else, but this last point, who would ever dare to admit two Congregations to the destruction of both?

I beg the Superior, Father Ficocelli, to read this letter, or to have it read, to his Community. Let him also tell me, whether there are among you any who approve of the writing of Father Maione.

Please also to have a copy of this letter sent to the house

at Scifelli, so that I may be informed, whether there is any one there who is not of my opinion.

I bless you, my dear Father, and all your subjects. I expect to receive an answer, at least from the house at Frosinone. Send hither one of your subjects, that he may give his opinion on the points of which I have spoken above. Write also to Scifelli that a member of that Community may be sent to Nocera.

But some one will say that the Rector Major speaks thus in order to preserve the faculty of receiving and of dismissing subjects.

I am eighty-four years of age; am I, then, in a condition to hope to live a hundred years more? Even this morning I received a warning to prepare myself for death.

Besides, it is not true that the Rector Major can govern as he pleases; the Rule imposes upon him many restrictions preventing him from doing what he pleases.

I have, it seems to me, only a few days to live. My desire is to leave the Congregation free from troubles; for the devil always gains something amid disunion. I hope, nevertheless, not to leave this world before seeing peace restored. But if God wishes to call me to him, while the Congregation is in the midst of these trials, I will be resigned; for I desire only one thing: to die and to live in the accomplishment of the will of God. Nevertheless, if I mistake not, affairs are now on the way of being settled. I hope, then, that the Blessed Virgin will gain the victory, and that Satan will be defeated.

As for the fact of granting the decisive vote to all the Consultors, Father Cimino says that in the transaction of business six persons are better judges than only one person.

But St. Thomas (*opusc. 20, cap. 2, de Reg. Princ. p. 526*) says that the government in the hands of one man is more favorable to peace than in the hands of several. The reason of this is clear: the government by

several persons facilitates the formation of parties; now parties are the ruin of good government. If among us the six Consultors had decisive votes, we should soon have six parties.

BROTHER ALFONSO MARIA,
Rector Major.

After the original preserved in the archives of the Congregation of Bishops and Regulars, case: *Liguorini* 1806.

LETTER 968.

To Father Carmine Picone, Rector of the House at S. Angelo a Cupolo.

Day fixed for the opening of the General Assembly at Nocera.—Conditions of the validity of the elections.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

NOCERA, April 23, 1780.

My dear Father Carmine: It has been decided that the Assembly is to open on the 16th of next May. Please send hither on this date the members of your Community, chosen by virtue of the instruction that you have received.

If, by chance, the election should not have been legitimate, either because it has been neglected to have the subjects vote who are in the house and who are desirous of voting; or, because it has been neglected to notify the absent members of the Community, so that they might send their sealed votes,—votes that should be opened only by the scrutators of the election; in these two cases (unless the absent had renounced their vote) a new election would have to take place. This would also have to take place, if liberty had not been allowed the electors of choosing one or two subjects from among the members of the Community who are present, as well as from among those that are absent. It is, moreover, understood that the absent can by letter communicate their views to the deputies elected,

if they cannot do so orally. Such is the explanation of the difficulties presented by some Fathers to your Reverence and forwarded through you to Father Andrea [Villani].

Take care to send a copy of this letter to those of your Fathers that are absent from home; they will thus know their rule of conduct in the election that is to be held. Send the necessary messengers, therefore, so that the conditions of a legitimate election may be fulfilled, and that the deputies elected may be present here on the day that has been fixed. If they are on a mission, have them replaced, or defer the mission to another time of next year.

Have the proceedings of the election deposited in the archives of the Community, and give a copy of them to the deputies, a copy signed by the secretary of the election and furnished with the seal of the house. It should be mentioned in the document that *the Fathers electors communicate to the individuals elected by them, the power of sitting in their name in the aforesaid Assembly, there to propose and to determine all that will be regarded as necessary concerning the new Regolamento, approved by his Majesty, our sovereign (may God have him in his holy keeping) and to decide upon all the measures indispensable to the good government of the Congregation.*

Please to execute faithfully the prescriptions that I have marked out, otherwise you will cause me great displeasure. Besides, the Assembly will begin its sessions, even though the deputies of your house be absent, and in the Assembly measures will be taken to prevent any subsequent acts of disobedience.

I expect from you, dear Father, an acknowledgment of the receipt of this letter, and I bless you and your subjects.

BROTHER ALFONSO MARIA,
Rector Major.

[*P. S.*] Do not scruple to lend one or the other book to any respectable person. Send the Life of Abbé de Rancé,

therefore, to the Fathers at Benevento, that they may give it to Don Michele Capasso, through Canon Capobianco.

After the original preserved in the archives of Father General at Rome.

LETTER 969.

To Father Gasparo Caione, Rector of the House at Benevento.

He should invest his two deputies with more ample powers.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

NOCERA, April 25, 1780.

Complaints are made here about you, that you have given to your deputies power to give counsel, but not to decide anything.

I have, however, always written to you and requested you to send those two subjects, not only to give counsel, but to come to a decision touching our present difficulties.

It is true, all the members of the Assembly can only give counsel; on the king alone is it incumbent to decide.[1] But, since it is desired that you should give to your deputies the power of deciding, give it to them, in order to satisfy the confrères.

I bless you, dear Father, and all your subjects.

BROTHER ALFONSO MARIA,
Rector Major.

After the original preserved in the archives of Father General at Rome.

[1] It is not that the saint recognized in the king any power in matters that concerned only ecclesiastical authority; for, it is well known what he thought of regalism. He spoke only of a question of fact, at present so burdensome to the Congregation, and the evil consequences of which he tried as much as possible to diminish. Every time, therefore, that he spoke of the king and of his pretended

LETTER 970.

To Father Amelio Ficocelli, at Frosinone.

He manifests his financial distress.—Advice relative to the approaching Assembly.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

NOCERA, April 28, 1780.

My dear Father Amelio: I have, as yet, received nothing of my pension; but I hope to receive a considerable part of it next month.

I had almost resolved to write to you not to borrow those hundred ducats, for I wished to send them to you myself; but now I wish you to borrow them. In fact, although I might receive, next month, my entire pension, or, at least, a part of it, yet I should be none the less in trouble; for, at present we are negotiating with the Grand Almoner, in order to obtain a new royal ordinance which will assure the future of the Congregation. This ordinance is intended to correct the *Regolamento*, which for three months has thrown the Institute into disorder and has caused it the greatest injury, and to assure the good government of the Congregation.

I hope, however, to send you some help next month; but it will not be such as I would desire; for my pension will be very much impaired by reason of the new road that is to pass through Calabria, towards which, by virtue of a royal ordinance, I must give 10 per cent. of my pension.

Send me, without delay, the subject of your Community, who is to take seat in the Assembly.

I repeat: send him immediately, for the Assembly will

rights, he concurred (we shall see other examples of this) rather with the opinion of the government; but this was in order to avoid a greater evil and in order not to provoke on the part of the civil authority, the most disastrous measures.

open next week. Give your deputy the power to decide the questions that will be proposed.

The Father, whom you will send, is to be elected by secret vote and by the majority of the Fathers of your house (of those absent, as well as of those present). He must be given the faculty of giving a decisive vote on questions relative to the good government of the Congregation.

Pray to God for me, for, in the midst of all these difficulties, I feel myself overwhelmed with sorrow.

I bless you, my dear Father, and all your subjects.

BROTHER ALFONSO MARIA,
Rector Major.

After the original in possession of Cavaliere Giancarlo Rossi at Rome.

LETTER 971.

To Father Bartolomeo Mattia Corrado.

Regret at hearing of his illness.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

NOCERA, April 30, 1780.

My dear Father Bartolomeo: How much do I regret, amidst my many trials, to hear of your illness! But I expect to see you here, as soon as your health is restored.

Father Maione did not wish to withdraw to a house in the Romagna, and I am told that he still continues to intrigue.

When you come here you will be told all.

Do not fail to bring with you Father de Meo and the other deputy of your house.

This Father, who wishes to know everything, will be able to learn all, when he comes here, when he may read all the papers at his leisure.

I bless you, my dear Father, and all your companions.

BROTHER ALFONSO MARIA.

After the original in possession of Cavaliere Giancarlo Rossi at Rome.

LETTER 972.

To two Fathers, Elected to the General Assembly.

He entreats them to give up a certain project.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

[NOCERA, end of April, 1780.]

I earnestly entreat you, my very dear Brethren, to give up the idea of deposing those two Consultors,[1] because that would ruin everything.

It is true, several of you cannot bear these two subjects; but I hope to God, with the aid of the Blessed Virgin, that all animosities will come to an end. Let us carry on the work of conciliation as we have begun it, and God will reap glory therefrom.

If, on the contrary, we wish to carry things by storm, I fear that the minds will become still more divided, and the devil will thereby derive some profit.

I feel that God continues to inspire me with this manner of looking at things; the Grand Almoner will not be hostile to it, and you should do violence to yourselves to embrace the same view, though it may not be your own.

I am the head of the Congregation; I regard it as certain, therefore, that God does not lead me on to what is false or prejudicial to the Institute.

Hell, I see, is making every effort to sow discord among us; but I, on the contrary, feel myself moved to establish

[1] Fathers Maione and Cimino.

peace, and surely, it seems to me, this result will be obtained, if my advice is followed.

Write me a few words of peace on Sunday morning.

Tannoia, Book iv., Chapter xxi.

LETTER 973.

To Father Gasparo Caione, Rector of the House at Benevento.

He formally orders him to send to Nocera the two deputies elected by his Community.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

NOCERA, May 1, 1780.

To avoid new delays, and since the numerous messengers sent hither and thither, have not yet been able to induce any one to come (which causes me great pain, as it is a breach of formal obedience), I believe it my duty to send the present messenger to tell you that the two deputies elected by your house should be here at the latest on the 12th of this month.

You will, therefore, dear Father, without fail take the necessary measures to send the aforesaid deputies to the General Assembly which will open its sessions on the 12th instant.[1]

I bless you and all your subjects.

[1] In fact, the deputies of the houses assembled on the 12th of May. From the beginning of this date till June 26, the Assembly held its sessions, more than one of which were stormy on account of the division of minds. St. Alphonsus did not, nor could he hardly, take any part in it. However, he was confirmed in his office and Father Corrado was given him as his Vicar-General, and that for the houses of the kingdom. The seeds of division, sown by the *Regolamento*, which could not be openly rejected, had then already produced their fruit. The houses of the Pontifical State, keeping the primitive Rule in its full vigor, were thus separated from the houses of the kingdom, which were condemned to pass under the Caudine

A word more. The order that I give you, dear Father, in your quality of Rector, or to any one in your place, I give by a formal precept of obedience. I see myself constrained to have recourse to this measure, for you make so little of obedience, that you have not answered a word to the many letters that I wrote to you on the subject.

BROTHER ALFONSO MARIA,
Rector Major.

After the original preserved in the archives of Father General at Rome.

LETTER 974.

To Marquis Domenico Antonio di Avena, Counsellor of the Royal Chamber of S. Chiara, at Naples.

He recommends to him a Canon of Evoli for promotion.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

NOCERA DE' PAGANI, June 5, 1780.

Your Excellency: An ecclesiastic, and, above all, a bishop should nourish the greatest desire of seeing the churches and their respective dignities bestowed upon the most worthy and meritorious subjects. I, therefore, take the liberty of recommending to your Excellency, Don Giuseppe Maria Pisciotta, Chanter of the collegiate church of Evoli, in the diocese of Salerno.

The dignity of *primicerius*, the first of all, is vacant in this church, and to be invested with it, I am told, that one must have the degree of doctor, as is required by the Bull of the foundation of this church, and by a decision emanating from Rome, in 1710. Now, among the Canons no one, except Don Pisciotta, bears the title of doctor, and

forks of the royal *Regolamento*. This separation was only a separation *de facto;* but it afterwards became a separation *de jure*, when the Sovereign Pontiff intervened, as we shall see later on.

he, moreover, possesses (as the subjoined note testifies) the other requisite qualities. All this being considered, he seems to me to be preferable to all his confrères. But, according to the regulations that are now in vigor, the recommendation to the court of Rome should be made by the king, our master. I, therefore, appeal to your well-known goodness, and I earnestly request you to intercede in favor of my client with Mgr. Sanseverino, confessor of his Majesty, in order that this prelate may obtain the desired recommendation.

Your usual kindness and the personal merits of my client inspire me with the firm confidence that you will grant me this favor.

Please believe me to be entirely at your service, and accept the expression of profound respect, with which I have the honor to be, your Excellency's

Very devoted and grateful servant,

ALFONSO MARIA DE LIGUORI, *Bishop.*

After the Neapolitan edition of 1848.

LETTER 975.

To the Fathers and Brothers of the Four Houses of the Kingdom.

Act by which the saint notifies the subjects of the houses of the kingdom of the decision reached by the General Assembly.—Various dispositions.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

PAGANI, June 26, 1780.

The king, our master (may God preserve him), has directed by his royal ordinance, dated August 21, 1779, that our four houses of the kingdom, that is, of Ciorani, Nocera, Iliceto and Caposele, should each have its respective head, charged with the interior government, and that there be established also the various necessary offices. As

these various offices have hitherto been subject to changes, we have believed it to be our duty, by reason of the aforesaid ordinance, to proceed to the election of new officials, and thus to provide for a good government of the Congregation.

For this end, by a letter addressed to our four houses on the 28th of March of this year, we ordained that each of them should elect two deputies. The latter were to assist at the General Assembly of these four houses, and to decide upon all the measures necessary to assure the good government of the Congregation; in other words, they were to proceed to the election of the Assistants or Consultors of the Rectors of the aforesaid houses, and finally of the other officials.

Moreover, there was no law fixed for the duration of office as Rector Major,[1] and we were, besides, weighed down by years. For these and other reasons, which are expressed in our act of resignation, we thought it necessary to lay down the burden of government. We, then, formally and spontaneously resigned the office of Rector Major; but upon the earnest and numerous representations of the aforesaid deputies of the four houses, and to respond to the unanimous desire, which sought to confirm us in this charge, we believed it our duty to yield to their solicitations. We have, therefore, notwithstanding our advanced age, sacrificed ourselves to the interests of the Congregation.

Consequently we, Rector Major of the Congregation existing in the aforesaid houses of the kingdom, on this day, the 26th of June, of the current year 1780, by virtue

[1] That is, by no civil laws. For the Pontifical Brief *Ad pastoralis dignitatis fastigium*, dated February 25, 1749, declared *Alphonsus de Liguori, Congregationis SSmi Redemptoris perpetuus Rector Major* (Alphonsus de Liguori perpetual Rector Major of the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer).

of the ordinance of August 1779, already quoted, and of the new *Regolamento*, in the manner and with the necessary reservations [1] expressed in another writing, signed by us and by the general deputies before-mentioned, after taking the advice, the counsel and the vote of these same deputies, we choose as General Assistants, Reverend Fathers Bartolomeo Mattia Corrado, Andrea Villani, Antonio Maria Tannoia, Pietro Paolo Blasucci, Alessandro de Meo, and Giuseppe Maria Pavone. We, moreover, choose for Procurator-General of the four above-mentioned houses Giov. Battista di Costanzo, and we desire and ordain that they should be recognized and received as such by all the subjects of the aforesaid houses.

But our advanced age does not permit us to bear alone the burden of the government of the whole Congregation. Hence, always with the advice, counsel and vote of the same deputies of the four houses, we have decided to take as our Vicar-General or Coadjutor Father Bartolomeo Mattia Corrado, already chosen by us as an Assistant, and to this end we communicate to him all the necessary authority that is at our disposal. Nevertheless, it is understood that we wish to be informed of the more important affairs.

Hence we ordain that all the subjects of the four above-

[1] The members of the General Assembly that believed that they should accept the *Regolamento*, did so, not without conditions, but with the necessary reservations. They only wished to avoid the destruction of the Institute, to gain time, and to devise a means of obtaining from the king larger concessions, destined to protect the *substance* of the Rule, approved by the Holy See. It is not, therefore, astonishing that St. Alphonsus believed that he should yield to circumstances. On the other hand, the Fathers representing the houses of the Pontifical State, absolutely refused to vote and combatted the project. Strong as they were with the Pontifical authority, under the régime of which the most perfect liberty was assured them, they did not in any way wish to recognize the authority of the king. Had they, moreover, wished to take part in the voting, they could not have done so legally, as the *royal placet* was wanting.

mentioned houses should recognize and receive Father Bartolomeo Mattia Corrado as our Vicar-General.

Wishing, besides, to provide at once for the good government of the four houses of the kingdom, we command all the subjects of the respective houses to recognize and to receive as local Rectors, the Reverend Fathers: Diodato Criscuoli for the house at Ciorani; Giuseppe Gaetano Cardone for the house at Nocera; Sosio Lupoli for that at Iliceto; Lorenzo Negri for that at Caposele, all appointed by the advice, counsel and vote of the aforesaid deputies of the four houses. We intend by this election to rescind every other election held in the past, and at the same time, we annul every other letter patent of the Vicar-General formerly drawn up by us, as also every other writing, every other letter containing appointments or elections of Rectors, Superiors, Consultors, general and local, and Admonitors.

In testimony of which we have drawn up the present act, signed with our own hand and furnished with the usual seal.

PAGANI, June 26, 1780.

Father Avena, one of the two deputies of the house at Iliceto, called to take part in this election, refused to do so, having this very morning, as he says, resigned the deputation.

ALFONSO MARIA DE LIGUORI, *Rector Major.*

BARTOLOMEO MATTIA CORRADO, *deputy of the house at Ciorani.*

MICHELE TOZZOLI, *deputy of the house at Ciorani.*

ALESSANDRO DI MEO, *deputy of the house at Nocera.*

GIUSEPPE GAETANO CARDONE, *deputy of the house at Nocera.*

FRANCESCO AMATI, *deputy of the house at Iliceto.*

VINCENZO GENINO, *deputy of the house at Caposele, and Secretary.*

L. ✠ *S.*

Ita et tales sunt, et in fidem sigilli. [The foregoing signatures and seals are authentic.)

GIOVANNI DE NOVI, *Notary at Angri.*

L. ✠ *S.*

After the original preserved in the archives of Father General at Rome.

LETTER 976.

To Cardinal Francesco Banditi, Archbishop of Benevento.

He begs him to take in hand the cause of the Congregation, and to intervene with the Holy See.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

[NOCERA, July? 1780.]

After a thousand thoughts had crossed my mind, I, finally, adopted that of writing to your Eminence, and I come to tell you, my Father, that, if you wish to see our Congregation saved, you must necessarily espouse its cause and act with freedom, doing as God may inspire you; otherwise the dissensions will continue to divide us, and we shall not attain any good.

It is necessary, I repeat, for you to take our cause in hand, without regard to anything that may have been written by us, without regard to the Assembly, or the election of Consultors and of Rectors; and if your Eminence wishes to deprive me of my office of Rector Major, do as you think best before God.

In fact, I desire only one thing, namely, to see my poor Congregation saved, and the only means to do so, is that which I have just pointed out.

Do not listen to what others may say; and please write to our Holy Father, the Pope, what you believe may be most calculated to resuscitate this corpse.

I pray and will continue to pray to the Blessed Virgin to

aid you to triumph over all difficulties. I have, moreover, ordered all our subjects, strictly to conform to the least directions given by your Eminence.

May it please your Eminence to accept the expression of very humble respect with which I have the honor to be . . .

Tannoia, Book iv., Chapter xxii.

LETTER 977.

To Father Pietro Paolo Blasucci, at Girgenti.

He requests him to go at once to Naples, to attend to the interests of the Congregation.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

NOCERA, August 19, 1780.

My dear Pietropaolo: To call you to Naples at the present time is, I know, unfortunate for the affairs of Sicily; but when a man is on the point of drowning, he grasps whatever happens to be within reach.

Your presence at Naples seems to be indispensable. The letter which you wrote might have done much good; but, in my opinion, the Congregation is still on the brink of destruction.

My life is only a prolonged death; this is all that I can say.

As long as I am in this world, the Congregation, I hope, will maintain itself; but once I am dead, and this will happen soon, it seems to me impossible that the confrères, dependent on the Pope, will submit to the *Regolamento* of the king, as they have already given to understand.

Examine, therefore, thoroughly, my dear Father, the danger in which we are, and do as you think best; otherwise, I fear we shall be witnesses of a catastrophe.

You should go to Naples and visit all our houses; for, as

to myself, I am a poor cripple; I can hardly breathe, and every day my breath fails me more and more.

Recommend yourself to our Lord, and do afterwards what God will inspire you to do.

I bless you, dear Father, and all your subjects.

Pray to the Blessed Virgin that she may grant me a good death.

We must address ourselves to the king; for the Grand Almoner is the one that has ruined us. I have tried to induce him, no longer to sustain the *Regolamento* of Father Maione, but I did not succeed. I can only repeat without ceasing: *May Thy holy will be done, O Lord!*

BROTHER ALFONSO MARIA,
Rector Major.

After the original preserved in the archives of Father General at Rome.

LETTER 978.

To Father Diodato Criscuoli, Rector of the House at Ciorani.

He asks him for a small sum of money.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

PAGANI, September 1, 1780.

You know, my dear Father, the needs of the Congregation; it has incurred considerable expenses and is still doing so.

I have already given my contribution, and I will continue to do so; but at present I am without resources. Now money is absolutely necessary, since negotiations must be begun at Rome and at Naples.

I, therefore, beg you most earnestly to send me ten

ducats. I hope there will be no difficulty in doing so, for there is question of the common cause.

I bless your Reverence and all,

BROTHER ALFONSO,
Rector Major.

After the original preserved in the archives of Father General at Rome.

LETTER 979.

To Sister Maria Saveria Pescara, in the Monastery alla Croce di Lucca, Naples.

He promises her the prayers that she asks for.

J. M. J.

NOCERA DE' PAGANI, September 25, 1780.

Reverend Mother: I have received the letter that you have done me the honor to write to me. I will recommend your niece to our Lord and to the Blessed Virgin, that things may not turn out as you fear they will, and that the will of God may be accomplished.

It is understood that you will share in the prayers that I will offer for your relative.

On the other hand, I recommend myself to your prayers, and I am with great respect, Reverend Mother,

Your very humble servant,

ALFONSO MARIA DE LIGUORI, *Bishop.*

After the original in possession of Father Netti, Oratorian, at Naples.

LETTER 980.

To Mother Maria Angelica del SS. Sacramento, Superior of the Redemptoristines at Sant' Agata de' Goti.

He recommends to her the daughter of his servant Alessio.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

NOCERA DE' PAGANI, October 4, 1780.

I have learned with pleasure from your letter, that two of your postulants will take the religious habit during the present month, and thus increase the number of your daughters. I pray to our Lord to communicate to them his spirit.

I also hear that the daughter of Alessio will enter among you on the same day.[1] I recommend her to your charity

[1] Alessio Pollio was the faithful servant of St. Alphonsus. After having placed his daughter in the convent, he himself took the habit of our Congregation, and appeared later on as a witness in the process of canonization of the saint. We cannot here give his long and important deposition, but we can, at least, quote the passage in which the good servant relates in a general way the relations in which he stood to the illustrious bishop.

"It was in the year 1758," he says, "that I had the happiness of seeing for the first time the venerable servant of God, Alphonsus Maria de Liguori. In company with my late director, D. Urbano Cimino, I went to visit him at Naples, my native city. I met him in the palace of his brother, Don Ercole, near my dwelling. He gave me the most salutary advice, and thenceforward, whenever he called upon his brother, I did not fail to offer him my respects, either alone or in company with Don Urbano. When he had been consecrated bishop, he received me into his service, on his return from Rome in 1762. I was then engaged in shoemaking, and I was delighted to serve so holy a prelate. After this time I remained in his service, either in the diocese of Sant' Agata or the house of S. Michele, whither he retired after resigning the episcopate. I have also had the happiness of being near him till his death, and I very often spoke to him, either of things spiritual or of the details relative to my employment." (*Catalogue of Witnesses.* Witness v. page 4.)

and, if you can be a little lenient in the matter of dowry, I shall be most happy, for Alessio is embarrassed enough in consequence of the expenses that he has to incur.

I recommend myself to your prayers and to those of your Community, and I bless you, Reverend Mother, while signing myself,

Your very humble servant,

ALFONSO MARIA DE LIGUORI, *Bishop.*

[*P. S.*] Please send back Alessio immediately, for I need his services.

After a copy.

LETTER 981.

To Father Francesco Antonio de Paola, President of the Houses in the Pontifical State.

He rejoices at the success of the Congregation in the States of the Pope.—Grave reason for accepting the *Regolamento;* he requests Father de Paola to make this known to the Sovereign Pontiff.—Admirable resignation of the saint.[1]

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

NOCERA, October 8, 1780.

My dear Don Francesco: The day before yesterday I had your letter, written to Father Ficocelli, read to me.

[1] On the 22d of September the Sacred Congregation of Bishops and Regulars had published the following decree: "Wishing to give a lawful Superior to the houses of the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer, established in the diocese of Benevento and in that of Veroli, Our Holy Father the Pope, in an audience granted by him to the undersigned Monsignor, the Secretary of the Congregation of Bishops and Regulars, has deigned to appoint as President of these houses, Father Francesco de Paola, the present Superior of the house at Frosinone, diocese of Veroli . . . in the place of those who as Superiors-General of said Congregation have adopted with their partisans a new rule, essentially different from the old one, and who, on account of having thus deserted their Institute,

Thank God, I have not lost my head; I am, therefore, happy that the Fathers in the Pontifical States are subject to the power of the Pope, and that you have been appointed their Superior. The news of the mission at Velletri gives me great pleasure. All is well, and you could not but accept the office, as it was the will of the Pope.

have ceased to form part of this Congregation, and have, consequently, lost the favors and prerogatives granted to it by the Holy See."

Thus Pius VI. spoke in 1780; but sixteen years afterwards, when occupied with the beatification of Alphonsus, the same Pontiff published the following Brief, which attests the innocence of the servant of God:

Pius VI., Pope.

FOR A PERPETUAL REMEMBRANCE.

"The Congregation of Sacred Rites, in a special session which it recently held by our order, has discussed, on the report of its Prefect, our venerable Brother, Cardinal Giovanni Archinto, Bishop of Sabino, the question, whether the objection raised against the servant of God, Alphonsus Maria de Liguori, Founder of the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer, and formerly Bishop of Sant' Agata de' Goti, in regard to the changes of the Rules of his Congregation, is in opposition to the giving of a signature required for the further progress of the 'Examination of the Virtues in the Case and for the Effect, of which there is Question' (*Super dubio virtutum in casu et ad effectum, de quo agitur*]. The Sacred Congregation has, therefore, heard our dear Son, Master Gerolamo Napulionio, Procurator of the Faith, examined the reasons given *pro* and *con*, and then deemed it a duty to answer as follows: *The objection is, by no means, valid, and silence must be put forever on this point, so that in the ulterior examination of the cause, no one, either the Promoter of the Faith, or any person whatsoever, having a right to vote on this matter, can make the least mention of it.*—We had approved this decree, but our dear Sons, the present Superior-General of said Congregation, and his confrère, Giuseppe Gaetano Gardone, Postulator of the Cause of the servant of God, have begged us most earnestly to give a more explicit approbation. We do this the more willingly, since we recall to mind with what admirable zeal the servant of God often exhibited, either orally, or by his acts and writing his respect and

The Pope will, no doubt, believe me culpable for having accepted the *Regolamento* of the king; but could you not make him understand by some friend that we were running the risk of losing all, if I did not accept the *Regolamento?* If the Pope knew this, he would certainly not condemn me.

Later on, when the proper time arrives, I hope to be able to inform the Sovereign Pontiff of all that has happened and to ask the favor that I desire; for I have not forgotten the affection which he has shown me in the past, notwithstanding my unworthiness, and I hope to live and to die as a very faithful servant of His Holiness, and as a very faithful servant of the Church.

I beg you, my dear Father, to find some one to plead my cause with the Pope; for at present I cannot write to him;

submission to this Holy Apostolic See. We, therefore, again approve by virtue of these presents the decree issued by the said Congregation of Rites. We confirm it, and we strengthen it by the Apostolic sanction. We decree that the present letters be now and in perpetuity invariable, valid and efficacious; that they obtain and produce their full and entire effects; that they be entirely profitable to those whom they concern and whom they will concern later on in whatever time it may be, and that they be by each of them inviolably observed; and that all the judges, whoever they may be, ordinary or delegated, even the Auditors of the Causes of the Apostolic Palace and the Nuncios of the Holy See, shall judge and define in accordance with what has been established above, all power and faculty of judging and of interpreting otherwise being taken from them; and that all that might be attempted in any other sense on this subject by whomsoever and by whatsoever authority, with or without knowledge of these letters, shall be of no effect; the Constitutions and Apostolic Ordinances, and all things to the contrary notwithstanding. We wish, moreover, that every copy of these letters, even when printed, provided it bear the signature of a notary public and be furnished with the seal of a person constituted in ecclesiastic authority, be regarded in tribunals and outside of them as authentic as if the original were exhibited or shown.

Given at Rome, at St. Peter's, under the Fisherman's ring, the 29th of April, 1796, the twenty-second year of our Pontificate."

and in the midst of grave dissensions, in which I have been involved, I can only resign myself to the will of God.

And you, my dear Fathers, who reside in the Pontifical States, do not forget to pray for me in the holy sacrifice of the Mass that I may obtain the grace of a happy death, for my end is near.

I have loved you all very much. The Lord has permitted this division; may his holy will be adored forever!

If you can write to me from time to time, to inform me of your success, I shall be very glad. May Jesus and Mary bless you all, and pray to them for me.

If in future you can do ought to further a reunion, you will afford me pleasure. At least, I entertain the hope, that later on, if we need assistance, or if you desire our help, we may aid each other, not for private interests, but only for the glory of God and for the welfare of souls.

Live Jesus and Mary! It is not incumbent on me, but on the Pope, to bless you.

BROTHER ALFONSO MARIA DE LIGUORI, *Bishop.*

After the original preserved in the archives of Father General at Rome.

LETTER 982.

To Mgr. Carlo Bergamo, Bishop of Gaeta.

He solicits the favor of seeing him at Nocera in regard to the affairs of the Congregation.[1]

[NOCERA, about October 12, 1780.]

My Lord: I had wished at first to pay you a visit in person; but the pains that keep me to my invalid's chair,

[1] St. Alphonsus hoped that the mediation of this prelate, his intimate friend, might induce the Grand Almoner to ask the king for certain modifications in the *Regolamento*. These modifications would have substantially saved the old Rule, and the reunion of the whole Institute under one head, would have become easy. Mgr.

my great age of eighty-four years, and my numerous infirmities oblige me to renounce this project. I hope to have you here, therefore, and I beg you to be so good as to come to see me. God will surely reward you for this journey; for your presence, I hope, will put an end to all the troubles.

All the Fathers of this house, and those of the other houses, are expecting your visit as eagerly as myself, and are asking for it. In fact, there is question of averting the ruin of a Congregation that hitherto has sanctified innumerable provinces. Your Lordship is full of zeal and charity; you will then, I hope, render me this service.

Tannoia, Book iv., Chapter xx.

LETTER 983.

To Cardinal Francesco Maria Banditi, Archbishop of Benevento.

He begs him to listen to the explanation of the facts relative to the *Regolamento* and to use his influence in favor of the Congregation.

[NOCERA, October 18, 1780.]

Your Eminence: I am at the end of my days, and a prey to the most cruel anguish. My Congregation of missiona-

Bergamo willingly complied with the invitation of the saint and proceeded to Nocera. The conclusion of the interview was, that the Bishop of Gaeta should go to Benevento to see Cardinal Banditi, "to confer," says Father Tannoia, "about the means of preserving the work of the missions in the kingdom of Naples. I was charged with another Father to accompany him; and when we had explained the state of things to the Cardinal, the latter was moved to tears. Nevertheless, he was of opinion, that we should address no petition to the Pope, all proceedings at Rome, according to his view, being hurtful rather than useful to the Institute."

Mgr. Bergamo on this occasion gave to the Cardinal the letter that follows.

ries, this Institute so favorably received in the kingdom of Naples and in the Roman State, so highly approved by ecclesiastical authority, and by the civil authority, this Institute, I say, is at present running the risk of being divided by some minds who do not agree among themselves. On the other hand, I fear that higher Superiors, impressed by the complaints of certain subjects, will judge things to be different from what they are. After having recommended myself to God and to the Blessed Virgin, I feel myself compelled, as it were, by an irresistible force, to have recourse to your Eminence and to put everything in your hands; since you are the only protector, whom the Lord has kept in reserve to dissipate all these troubles, and to sustain a work which, I know, you do not cease to recommend.

I come then (and all my companions join their prayers to mine) to supplicate you to take upon yourself this task. For this your Eminence need only to listen to the two Fathers who will explain to you the state of affairs; then you may form that judgment which your wisdom will dictate. This judgment will be the inviolable rule that will guide and pacify all minds.

You have received from God the most precious gifts, and all circumstances concur in rendering you alone capable of treating this important question. You cannot, it seems to me, refuse to do so, if you desire to render to the Most High due acknowledgment for those gifts. It would, in fact, be a beautiful act of gratitude to employ such gifts in sustaining a work, in which the glory and the service of God are concerned.

To accede to my request, to hear my prayers, you will also, I trust, regard the good offices of the holy Bishop of Gaeta, Mgr. Bergamo, who will convey to you my very humble petition.

Your Eminence, I hope, will not, by refusing me this favor, hasten my death and abridge the little time that still

remains to me to live. You will rather, I am quite confident, make me become calm, and you will consent to use your influence to terminate these quarrels. Yes, I hope, that either I shall see the end of these troubles before I die, or shall, at least, leave the world without regret, thinking that, thanks to your wisdom, these dissensions will soon be succeeded by the most perfect peace.

After an old copy.

LETTER 984.

To Father Francesco Antonio de Paola, President of the Houses of the Pontifical States.

The Pope, having desired to know the history of the new *Regolamento*, the saint communicates it to him through Father de Paola.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

NOCERA, October 18, 1780.

I have read your answer, in which you state, *the Pope allows me to be Rector Major of the houses of the Pontifical State and of those of the kingdom, provided an exact account is given to him of the whole affair.*

To understand well the nature of the question, it must be known, that when Pope Benedict XIV. sent us the Bull, by which he approved of the Congregation under the title of the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer, King Charles, then reigning, refused to accept this Bull, and we could not publicly use the Rules that the Pope had sent us. It was with difficulty, that the monarch allowed us to live together in the four houses of the kingdom. The king refused to ratify the Bull, as he was opposed to the introduction of new religious Orders into his States. Now to approve our Congregation with its vows of poverty, chastity and obedience and the oath of perseverance, was equivalent to recognizing a new religious Order.

It was this refusal of the king which, later on, determined some of our companions to procure from his Majesty this new *Regolamento*, which speaks only of spiritual exercises and of customs to be observed, either on the missions, or in the houses, assigned to us by the head of the State.

All my companions and I would have liked to follow the old Rule. For myself in particular I have labored with all my strength, and for a long time, to uphold the old Rule; but I did not succeed, and I had to yield *to escape the peril of seeing our houses suppressed.*

What could I do to maintain the old Rule against the determined will of the monarch and of his ministers, who were all of the same opinion as he was?

You now see me plunged into the deepest affliction, and I can only shed tears. But God wishes this to be so; may his holy name be forever blessed! I willingly believe that my sins have drawn down upon me and all my companions this chastisement of God.

The Pope lets me hope that he will restore to me the office of Rector Major. It is not this that affects me. The blow that has hurt me is the withdrawal of the faculties proper to the missions, faculties without which we can render to souls but feeble services.

I should like to have these faculties restored to us, in order that the Fathers of the States and of the kingdom may help one another, as we have hitherto done. See, then, dear Father, whether you can recover them for us; otherwise I will not be able to console myself on account of such a loss.

As for the court at Naples, I really do not know what to do. This court, you know, does not easily give up its pretensions, and all the petitions, that I should make, would be useless.

Answer me and give me some hope.

I embrace you with all my heart, with a truly fraternal

affection. You would like, you said in your letter to Father Tannoia, that I should tell you to come to Naples. [1] I also have a great desire to see you; we could thus arrange about a reunion, at least, a reunion, such as could now be effected. You would, therefore, afford me the greatest pleasure, if you could come soon. If you cannot, write me, at least, another letter, that I may know what line of conduct I should pursue.

Meanwhile, let us recommend the affair to our Lord and put our confidence in the Blessed Virgin.

I conclude by embracing you.

The Bishop of Gaeta was here to-day; he left here for Benevento, where he will go to see Cardinal Banditi. The latter, I hope, will do all that he can, to bring about a reunion, or, at least, to obtain for us the means of helping one another in the best possible manner.

I embrace you once more and I remain, Reverend Father, ...

BROTHER ALFONSO MARIA, *Bishop.*

After the original preserved in the archives of Father General at Rome.

LETTER 985.

To the Same.

Exposition of the stand taken by the government towards religious Orders, and of the means to bring about more favorable conditions.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

NOCERA, November 10, 1780.

My dear Father Francesco: We should well understand the relation of our Congregation to the government. If

[1] That is, to Nocera de' Pagani.

we pretend that the king repudiates the system [1] adopted at the present day by all the secular powers, we only lose time. All the princes of the present day and all their ministers absolutely defend the said system.

The only hope that we can entertain, is, that the Pope may grant us what Innocent XI. granted to the priests and to the clerics of S. Giuseppe in 1684, when he commuted their vows of poverty, chastity and obedience into simple oaths of observing these virtues (as we may read in the *Bullarium*, pages 420, 421). This is precisely what is indicated in the *Regolamento* that the king has imposed upon us. In this way, the members of the Congregation in the kingdom will follow the directions given by the king; those in the Romagna and at Benevento will continue to observe the Rule established by Benedict XIV. If we try to seek another way out of the difficulty, we shall obtain nothing.

We must, therefore, ask the Pope to grant us this favor. On this condition only, he must be told, our Congregation, which to the present day has done so much good in the kingdom of Naples and in Sicily, will continue to be useful to souls by means of the missions.

I have written to Father Caione that he should insist with all his might with Cardinal Banditi, that this prelate may obtain for us from the Pope the favor of which I speak.

I cordially embrace you and all your subjects.

BROTHER ALFONSO MARIA, *Bishop.*

After the original preserved in the archives of Father General at Rome.

[1] The system of amortization of all the property belonging to laics.

LETTER 986.

To Father Gasparo Caione, Rector of the House at Benevento.

He requests him to solicit the signature of Cardinal Banditi to a letter, addressed to the Sovereign Pontiff.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

NOCERA, November 10, 1780.

We have spent three days in composing the enclosed letter addressed to the Pope. Cardinal Banditi, I hope, will affix his signature, since without it it will probably have no effect.

I, therefore, earnestly request you to do all that you possibly can, to have the Cardinal add his signature. Once more, I earnestly request this of you, because, on the mediation of the Cardinal, we may found our hope of being favorably listened to by the Pope.

This evening I am going to have the Community here at Nocera begin a novena of nine *Our Fathers* and nine *Hail Marys* in honor of the Blessed Virgin for the success of this letter. I shall ask the Capuchins of St. Francis at Naples, to begin a novena on next Friday, for the same intention.

I bless you, dear Father, and all your subjects, and I beg you all to recommend to God this affair; it is in prayer alone that we place our hope.

Here in the kingdom, we have had a high Mass sung in all the houses to obtain this favor.

BROTHER ALFONSO MARIA.

[*P. S.*] I leave it to your judgment, whether any passage in the letter should be struck out.

After the original preserved in the archives of Father General at Rome.

LETTER 987.

To Father Francesco Antonio de Paola, President of the Houses in the Pontifical States.

He invites him to come to Nocera with another Father to treat about a reunion.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

NOCERA, November 13, 1780.

I write this letter to both, Father Francesco de Paola and Father Amelio Ficocelli, and I ask you both to come to Naples [Nocera]; you may borrow the money that you need for the journey.

After long and necessary deliberations, it was decided this evening, November 13, that you both should, without delay, come to see me here at Naples. We shall arrange the affair in an amiable and quiet manner, without disputing; for the vessel cannot sail on in this way.

With a view to bring about peace, we decided several points, in particular your journey to Naples; otherwise we shall not come to any satisfactory conclusion.

If, then, you have the intention of remaining in the Congregation, come as soon as possible. As for the expense of the journey, try to get what is necessary for coming and going.

I hope that, if you can possibly come, you will not refuse to come; for the welfare of the whole Congregation is at stake.

I bless you. Continue to pray to God for the Congregation.

BROTHER ALFONSO MARIA, *Bishop.*

[*P. S.*] Remember that, if you do not come, nothing of importance can be done, and things will remain in the same confusion as before.

After the original preserved in the archives of Father General at Rome.

LETTER 988.

To his Niece, Maria Teresa de Liguori, Pupil in the Monastery of S. Marcellino, at Naples.

He exhorts her to leave the world.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

[NOCERA, the month of November, 1780.]

My very dear Niece: When your Father was still alive, [1] you wrote to me that you would embrace the religious life, and I was greatly pleased to hear this; but since that time you have not said a word about such an intention.

I know that your father has left you some fortune; but your dowry is not rich, and if you go back to the world, you will never be able to engage yourself to any one but a poor cavalier.

As for myself, I desire your eternal salvation, and I say to you that, if you remain in the world, you will easily lose your soul, for the world at the present day is corrupt, and you will have been there but a short time, when you will be tempted to offend God.

I speak thus to you, because I know by experience that at present all married women are exposed to great temptations and that many fall.[2] Hence, I repeat: if you marry, you will soon lament having lost God.

After an old copy.

[1] Don Ercole de Liguori died the 8th of September, 1780.

[2] The saint refers here to the detestable custom of which he speaks more plainly in the following letter and of which mention was made in vol. ii., page 12, note 2. This wound, which was festering in the high society of Naples, was looked upon by St. Alphonsus with horror, and he denounced it energetically, whenever he had an occasion of doing so. With greater reason did he fear for a young niece, whose eternal salvation he had greatly at heart, and whose vocation to the religious state seemed to him to be certain.

LETTER 989.

To Don Pietro Gavotti, Tutor of the Children of Don Ercole de Liguori.

The same subject.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

[NOCERA, November 18, 1780.]

I wish to tell you that Maria Teresa, my niece and your pupil, is to me a source of great affliction; since formerly she ardently longed to be a nun, but for some time she has not said a word to me about this. I fear that she wishes to marry; this is as much as to say that she will more easily lose her soul.

Married ladies, at the present day, can with difficulty save their souls, for all of them usually live in sin on account of the numerous *cicisbeos*, who are to them an occasion of sin.

I have requested the priest, who is the confessor of my niece, to direct her most especially that she may embrace the religious life; be so kind as to do your part in this matter; for, if she marries, the unfortunate times in which we live will make me regard her as lost.

Tannoia, Book iv., Chapter xv.

LETTER 990.

To Father Francesco Antonio de Paola, President of the Houses in the Pontifical State.

He again proposes to him the expedient which could save the houses of the kingdom, and requests him to induce the Sovereign Pontiff to approve it.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

NOCERA DE' PAGANI, November 25, 1780.

I have received your letter, and I understand your embarrassment; but the contradiction dates from the day on which the Congregation was definitively established. The Pope approved it as a religious body, while the king never approved it in this form.

We must then apply a remedy, and for this purpose we must address ourselves, not to the king (for the king will never abandon his line of conduct), but to the Pope. By virtue of his supreme authority, the latter could find an expedient which we could never find.

This expedient, the only one that we can hope for, would be this: let the Pope consent that the Fathers of the Romagna observe the Rule established by Benedict XIV., and that on the other hand, the Fathers of the kingdom observe the *Regolamento* given by the king; and this *Regolamento* the Pope might sanction.[1] In no other way

[1] One evidently sees here that the saint professed the greatest submission towards the authority of the Sovereign Pontiff, since he regarded his intervention as necessary under the circumstances. Perhaps, one might say, he entertained too great a hope that the Holy See would approve a *royal Regolamento*, published intentionally *in opposition to the Rule* sanctioned by Benedict XIV. But this hope found its justification in the fact that it was impossible for the holy Doctor to obtain anything from the king, and in the fact that he wished to avert an evil that was imminent, namely, the destruction

can the houses of the kingdom subsist or be united with the others by a durable bond.

The union that we might hope for, would consist in this: when the Fathers of the Romagna need help, the Fathers of the kingdom could go to assist them; on the other hand, those of the Romagna could come to the aid of those in the kingdom. To do this it will be necessary to have the powers that we enjoyed before.

This is, my dear Father, what you should try to obtain; we cannot think of any other expedient. Let us, then, continue to pray, for God will lend his assistance, if the Pope permits the Fathers of the kingdom to observe the royal *Regolamento*, which favor, you say, it will not be difficult to obtain.

You are unceasingly urging me to send Fathers to Rome. I have often, and at great expense, deputed Fathers to apply to the Sacred Congregation; I have also used other means, and what was the result? I have merely thrown away my money.

I willingly consult with those around me; I have even made known to them the contents of this letter, and all tell me that nothing else could be done than what I propose. None of them could give me any other advice.

Let us now await the Pope's decision, since the Cardinal of Benevento, whose affection for us is unbounded, has written to him.

The Blessed Virgin, I hope, will suggest to the Pope some means which we cannot think of, and of which the Pope alone can think to avert the ruin of our Congregation. Notwithstanding our troubles, how many young men desire to be admitted into our ranks! God wishes that all these events should serve to increase his greater glory!

of a work so useful to souls as his Congregation was. Here one is reminded of the words of the Apostle: *Abraham hoped against hope.* —*Rom.* iv. 18.

I was recently told that it was a settled thing that Father Corrado should go to Benevento, where he would find Father Gasparo Caione, and both would then go to Rome, in order to deliberate with you what steps are to be taken. I have no news about their departure, but I fear that the bad weather may have prevented it. If I hear anything, I will let you know. Meanwhile let us continue to pray to Jesus Christ and to trust in the protection of the Blessed Virgin. I bless you.

ALFONSO MARIA DE LIGUORI, *Bishop.*

[*P. S.*] To second your efforts, I have written to Father Gasparo Caione to go without delay to join you at Rome. He was to make this journey in company with Father Corrado; but bad weather, I think, must have prevented them from setting out. We must have patience. This evening I wrote again to Father Caione to hasten his departure.

To sum up. We have absolutely nothing to hope from the king; on the other hand, if the Pope wishes that our Congregation be maintained, he could in his quality of common Pastor of souls and by his supreme authority, restore to us the powers that have been taken from us, or, at least, restore them secretly to us, with the prohibition to publish them.

The Sovereign Pontiff, I hope, is well disposed towards us. Courage, then! my dear Father, speak to him of this means; tell him that, if he wishes, he can save our Congregation and that this year the requests for missions are innumerable; but, if we do not recover our faculties, many souls will be lost.

I repeat: do not give way to fear, and speak to the Pope in the way I propose. His Holiness has so much zeal for the salvation of souls, and then there is question of the spiritual interests of two kingdoms, that of Naples and of Sicily.

I recollect, my dear Father, that on the 5th of this month, I ordered to be sent you at the same time with a letter of Father Cimino, a bill of exchange on the Bank del Salvatore, dated September 25, of the current year, drawn in favor of Father Bartolomeo Mattia Corrado, and endorsed by him for several others. I think I asked you not to use this draft, until the Fathers, of whom I have spoken, should come to you.

You have received it, I hope. As you are, without doubt, short of money, you may begin to use the draft at once.

After the original preserved in the archives of Father General at Rome.

LETTER 991.

To Father Gasparo Caione, Rector of the House at Benevento.

He requests him to go to Rome.—Reason why this journey is absolutely necessary.

J. M. J.

[NOCERA, November 25, 1780.]

My dear Don Gasparo: Father Francesco de Paola writes a long letter to me from Rome. Among other things he says that he hopes to succeed in his negotiation, but that the presence at Rome of several Fathers, and your presence especially, is necessary for this purpose.

I have answered him that he should lay aside all fear when speaking to the Sovereign Pontiff, and should try to obtain from him the restoration of the powers of which we have been deprived. But I think, my dear Father, that Father de Paola will not call upon the Pope, if you do not yourself go to Rome. You should, therefore, join him and accompany him to His Holiness. Thus united you will,

perhaps, be able to succeed in obtaining from the Pope the restoration of our faculties.

As for myself, I cannot stir from this place. Were it not for my numerous infirmities, I should already have departed. Go, then, to Rome, it is necessary; and, with Father de Paola, ask the Pope to restore to us our powers. If this point is gained, all is gained.

The re-establishment of the affairs of the Congregation demands, I repeat, that you go to Rome; for Father de Paola, left to himself, will obtain nothing; but, if he has you as a companion, he will, I hope, obtain the restitution of our powers.

I bless you and beg you to go to Rome without delay, and to confer with Father de Paola.

I had collected the sum of a hundred and seven ducats; but I do not know whether all has been absorbed by the numerous expenses that had to be incurred. I cannot, therefore, promise you any pecuniary help. Every one of us must, at the present time, do what he can for the interests of the Congregation.

I expect your answer at Nocera, and I bless you and your companions.

ALFONSO MARIA DE LIGUORI, *Bishop.*

After the original preserved in the archives of Father General at Rome.

LETTER 992.

To the Sovereign Pontiff, Pius VI.

He narrates to the Holy Father the history of the *Regolamento* and the reasons that determined him to submit to it. He humbly solicits a reunion of the houses of the Congregation.

[NOCERA DE' PAGANI, December 15, 1780.]

Most Holy Father: Prostrate at the feet of your Holiness, in the sentiments of most respectful resignation, I take the liberty of making known to you the following facts.

Since the day that some priests and I formed an Association to preach missions to the country people of the kingdom, the work that I wished to establish has met with continual obstacles and contradictions. Never did I suffer so much, however, as in these last days of my life; for after so many efforts and so many labors, I see this work on the point of being annihilated, and no one will be able to estimate the injury done to souls.

I have already made known to your Holiness through his Eminence, Cardinal Banditi, the sorrows that afflict me, and I have conjured you, Most Holy Father, not to allow a work to perish, so useful, and even so necessary to a kingdom, the needs of which are immense and the apostolic laborers so few. Under the circumstances, in which I found myself, it was impossible for me to pursue another course, in order to have my humble request reach your Pontifical throne.

I, therefore, asked this worthy Cardinal to draw the attention of your Holiness to the Rescript of the Sacred Congregation of Bishops and Regulars, dated the 25th of last September, and beginning with the words *Ex audientia Sanctissimi* [After an audience with the Holy Father]. This rescript has not only given to Father de Paola the

charge of governing, until other arrangements have been made, the houses of our Congregation situated in the dioceses of Veroli and Benevento, but it has also separated these houses from those of the kingdom, and, moreover, declared that my companions and myself had made ourselves unworthy of being regarded any longer as members of the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer, and that, consequently, we can no more enjoy the privileges and favors granted to this Institute by the Holy See, since we had rejected the Rules approved in 1749, by Benedict XIV., of happy memory, and had adopted a quite different mode of living. On the occasion of this rescript I asked the Cardinal to give your Holiness all the desirable explanations, and to expose to you the true facts concerning the imputation with which I am charged.

Permit me now, Most Holy Father, to submit to your enlightened mind certain considerations: they will show the irreparable evil that will follow the execution of such a rescript.

This Congregation took its rise in the kingdom, and the subjects that compose it are all, except two or three, natives of this country. As for the foundations established in the Pontifical States, they date back for many years; that in the diocese of Benevento is more than twenty-five years old; and no subject of the State has yet entered there. The result is that, if the houses of the States are to remain perpetually separated, the work of the missions will necessarily have to be abandoned; for it will be impossible to replace the subjects that the aforesaid houses at Veroli and Benevento will infallibly lose in time, either by death or from other causes. Besides, if it be made known, as has already been done, that the Congregation really exists only in the houses of the States, and that the subjects of the houses of the kingdom, not being regarded by His Holiness as members of this Institute, are declared

unworthy of enjoying the privileges and favors granted by the Holy See; if, I say, this becomes known, even those of this country will not apply for admission to the houses of the kingdom; and, on the other hand, the bishops, out of respect for the supreme decisions will cease to ask us for missions for their dioceses. This would then be the destruction of the immense good that we have begun here and in the States; and this is what I do not cease to deplore with bitter tears, at the foot of the crucifix.

I, therefore, invoke the innate clemency of your Holiness to allow me to submit the following considerations. The apostolic laborers are so rare in these two kingdoms of Naples and Sicily, that the requests for missions have been up to the present extremely numerous; and our Congregation has sent every year six or seven bands of missionaries, who during eight entire months have scoured the provinces of the two kingdoms, und thus given as many as fifty missions a year. I pass over in silence the innumerable novenas and retreats given with the greatest success in the course of the year to persons of every condition.

Labors so fruitful will, however, be destroyed, if your Holiness does not allow us to appeal to your paternal charity; if you do not cover with your high protection all the houses of this Congregation, those of the States and those of the kingdom; and if you do not re-establish among them the exchange of services that existed before. But you are the universal Pastor of the flock of Jesus Christ, the Pontiff destined to live in immortal fame by your zeal in preserving from destruction and in feeding the sheep confided to your care. We, therefore, hope to receive help from you.

The aforesaid decree of the Congregation is based on an imputation, with which I am charged, that I have abandoned the Rule of my Institute, to embrace another that is quite opposed to it.

If this were true, the authorities should have administered

a reproof and chastisement to me and my partisans personally, without going the length of separating the houses from one another, at the evident risk of causing the ruin of all of them.

The fact is not, however, what they say it is; for, if the new Rule is carefully examined, it is easily seen that it absolutely maintains the essence of the Institute, its end, the manner of living in it, the obligations of the subjects, and the interior government of the Association. The retrenchments, to which the Rule of 1749 was subjected, have, by no means, effected any essential changes, and may be reduced to this: these rules have been made to conform to the ordinances of the Catholic king, formerly issued for this Congregation, either when he gave his consent for the foundation of each of the four houses of the kingdom, or when I presented to his Majesty, on his formal order, the apostolic Brief of approbation, in order to obtain the royal *Placet* required by the laws of the kingdom. These royal ordinances and other documents bearing on this matter, I have transmitted to Cardinal Banditi. I have begged his Eminence to render an account to your Holiness and to remark to you, that certain points of the rule being the direct and personal work of the monarch, I necessarily had to yield to the decisions of the sovereign, if I wished to save the Congregation.

What could I then do, Most Holy Father, when the first foundations of the Institute had obtained the consent of his Majesty only with the most formal reservations? The conditions were the following: The houses of the Institute should not resemble convents of religious; they should be mere houses of retreat for secular priests, and each one of these priests should live there as in his own house: their existence, finally, would entirely depend on the will and good pleasure of the king. What objection could I make to the sovereign, when, after having examined the Rule approved by the Holy See, he made various changes?

On the model of this Rule he composed a general rule containing various prescriptions absolutely opposed to certain points, in particular to the vows and to the oath of perseverance; on these conditions, and on these conditions only, would he allow the existence of the four houses established in this kingdom, and permit no more new foundations. If I had not accepted this law, thus issued by the provident monarch, I would have incurred the king's indignation, and would have been obliged at once to abandon the work of the missions, since outside of the kingdom the Congregation had then no houses to continue this work.

I, therefore, believed it my duty to subject myself to this law of the sovereign, but I informed His Holiness, Benedict XIV., of what I had done, and I asked him again (for I had done so already) to deign to interpose his high mediation and to obtain for us the royal *Placet* for the whole Rule approved by the Holy See. The Pontiff was pleased to answer me that he would willingly do so, but his re-iterated recommendations remained fruitless.

Finally, during these latter times, a terrible persecution nearly destroyed the whole Congregation, and for the following reason: We had been accused of not having observed the conditions prescribed by the royal ordinances of which I have spoken, and especially of having followed the Rule, approved by the Holy See, in opposition to the decrees, which I have mentioned, without having obtained for it the *Placet* of the king; as a proof of this a copy of this Rule, printed at Rome in 1749, was given. There lived then a minister of the king, who, being charged with giving his opinion, counselled his Majesty to suppress our Institute. The royal Chamber of S. Chiara, commissioned to issue a definitive decree, after having listened to the two fiscal advocates, one of the Crown, the other of the royal Patrimony, came near advising the king to forbid us all

that is necessary to constitute a Congregation, namely, Superiors, novitiate and house of studies, General Chapters, vows, oath of perseverance, observance of any rule whatsoever, the use of any apostolic privileges.

All this commotion was created, Most Holy Father, not because it was established that this Rule was observed in its entirety, but merely because it was printed; that was enough to suppose that it was put in practice.

Wishing, then, to avert imminent destruction, and to prevent the blow, that the royal Chamber meditated, I made final efforts to obtain the approbation of the king by adapting the Rule of 1749, to the Constitution of the kingdom and to the prescribed ordinances.

By a favor altogether special, I obtained this approbation. Thus I saved from shipwreck the work of the missions, the houses of the kingdom, and also the houses in the States, as they were also taken into consideration. The substance of the Rule was, however, not touched; for I had again taken all possible care to protect the essential features of the Institute.

Your Holiness now sees, by the humble exposition that I have the honor of giving you, whether this poor Congregation has run great risks. You also see what I have done to save the Institute under these critical circumstances: nothing else was done than to present to the king the Rule approved by the Holy See, but with the restrictions which the Catholic king had made, and which we followed, in fact, in all that concerned temporal things and the relations with the government.

Your Holiness, I hope, will permit yourself to be convinced by this sincere exposition of facts, and will render to my companions and me your favors as formerly. You will re-unite the houses of the Congregation by prescribing for this reunion such regulations as you will think to be most suitable, and will permit us to continue to cultivate the

vineyard of the Lord, in the two kingdoms of Naples and of Sicily, the needs of which are so great.

With this hope, Most Holy Father, I most humbly prostrate myself at your feet, and I solicit your apostolic benediction.

I have the honor to be, Most Holy Father,

Your very humble, submissive and obedient son,

ALFONSO MARIA DE LIGUORI, *Bishop.*

NOCERA DE' PAGANI, December 15, 1780.

After the original preserved in the archives of the Sacred College of Bishops and Regulars: Case, *Liguorini* 1806.

LETTER 993.

To his Majesty, Ferdinand IV., King of Naples.

He solicits various concessions conducive towards reconciling the *Regolamento* with the Rule approved by the Holy See.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

[NOCERA, December, 1780.]

Sire: It has always appeared to me necessary for the success of the work of the missions that the missionaries, engaged in giving them, should profess absolute detachment from temporal interests, and that this virtue, so commendable, should shine in them in all its splendor. I would, therefore, wish that so important a conviction should be profoundly engraved in the hearts of my companions and of those who in future will consecrate themselves to so useful a work. I, therefore, believe that, in my quality of Head of the Congregation, I should propose to your Majesty the most proper means of securing this result. This would be that your Majesty should permit those who voluntarily embrace this ministry, to take an oath before God to lead a perfect Community-life, conform-

ably to poverty, without prejudice, however, to their own patrimonial goods and their usufruct of these goods, of which they can always dispose according to the terms of the *Regolamento*, approved by your Majesty by an ordinance of the 22d of last January.

Long and serious reflections have also convinced me of the importance of another point: it is that those who associate themselves in the work of the missions, should be obliged to remain in it and not to abandon it without a reasonable cause. Hence it would, it seems to me, be sovereignly useful, that your Majesty should permit them to take the oath of perseverance, an oath from which the Head of the Congregation may dispense for a just cause.

The passions, small though they be, are most frequently the cause why the best resolutions are abandoned; now the oath, of which I speak, would serve as a check. One could count then more surely on the sincerity of those who solicit admission, and their request would not inspire a suspicion that they were actuated by a strange motive. Besides, the Head who receives and supports them, and the older priests, who welcome them, would not see themselves deprived of an exchange of services, to which they have a right, above all, in the extreme poverty, that afflicts all the houses devoted to this work. Finally, those that enter the Association, will never seriously apply themselves to acquire the virtues necessary for the apostolic laborer, if they have not the intention, always to remain attached to the Institute; and, therefore, their missions would be hurtful rather than useful to souls.

The houses of the Congregation are extremely poor. This was the reason why your Catholic Majesty decided in 1747, by an ordinance addressed to the Mixed Tribunal, that the work should be aided by means of the superfluous revenues of *pious places*, and especially of the Congregation of the Castel di Sangro. But this arrangement was never

carried out, and, on the other hand, the expenses are considerable. It would then be proper, if your Majesty would grant to the aforesaid missionaries the permission to ask of their friends and benefactors some help during the harvest of grain and of olives. Their enemies have already counted this a crime; but your Majesty has never forbidden it; you have even tolerated it by an ordinance of 1752.

These three favors must necessarily be granted to the work of the missions, if one wishes it to continue its labors, to be consolidated, to enjoy tranquillity, good order and peace.

I implore, then, your Majesty to grant me these favors; they will be for my last days a very great consolation; they will permit me to die full of happiness and contentment. I will, moreover, employ the little time that remains to me to pray more earnestly to God than ever, and I will conjure him to lavish abundantly upon your august person and upon the entire royal family his choicest blessings.

I have the honor to be, Sire, in the sentiments of the most profound respect, your Majesty's

Very humble and very respectful subject,

ALFONSO MARIA DE LIGUORI, *Bishop.*

After the original preserved in the archives of Father General at Rome.

LETTER 994.

To Marquis Carlo de Marco.

He requests him to present the foregoing petition to the king.

Live Jesus, Mary. Joseph!

[NOCERA, December 1780.]

Your Excellency: You have always been full of kindness towards me; you have always shown me a benevolence that I do not deserve.

I should gladly have wished to call upon you in person, but infirmities confine me to my arm-chair, and I am eighty-four years of age. At present I am in great trouble, for all the good that my Congregation could accomplish, has been stopped, and the glory of God will thereby suffer.

Not knowing, to whom to have recourse, I invoke the aid of your Excellency, whose love for the glory of God is so well known, and I beg you to present this memorial to his Majesty.

Be so good, as to come to my assistance, and accept the profound respect . . .

Tannoia, Book iv., Chapter xxv.

LETTER 995.

To his Nephew, Don Giuseppe de Liguori.

As a Christmas greeting he wishes him the fear of God and the love of study.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

NOCERA DE' PAGANI, December 28, 1780.

Your dear letter has caused me great pleasure, and I thank you for your good wishes for Christmas.

In return, I offer you my sincere felicitations. I pray

that these days of joy may bring you every spiritual and temporal happiness that you can desire. On this occasion I recommend to you the holy fear of God and the love of study; for, if you know not how to profit by the time that God gives you, and by the graces that he lavishes upon you, your neglect may afterwards be a source of great sorrow to you.

Recommend me to our Lord.

I bless you and am always,

Your very devoted and affectionate uncle,

ALFONSO MARIA DE LIGUORI, *Bishop.*

After the original in possession of his Eminence Cardinal Sanfelice, Archbishop of Naples.

LETTER 996.

To Father Gasparo Caione, Rector of the House at Benevento.

He recommends to his prayers the application that he had made to the king.

[NOCERA, January 2, 1781.]

I request your Reverence to recommend to God the petition that I have addressed to the king. If it is successful, as I hope it will be, our Congregation will present a new aspect.

When Rome hears of the favors granted us by the king, neither the Sacred Congregation, nor the Pope, I trust, will oppose the reunion.

We are fervently praying for it here; may you also do the same. . . .

Tannoia, Book iv., Chapter xxv.

LETTER 997.

To his Niece, Maria Teresa de Liguori, Pupil in the Monastery of S. Marcellino, at Naples.

He thanks her for her Christmas wishes, and exhorts her carefully to study her vocation.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

NOCERA, January 3, 1781.

The good wishes that you addressed to me for the festival of Christmas, have afforded me much pleasure; and I feel very grateful to you for them.

On my part, I also wish that you may begin this year happily and that it may be followed by many others; may you employ them only to serve God, *who is so worthy of being loved!*

Recommend yourself to the Lord, and pray to him to manifest his divine will, so that you may know to which state of life he calls you.

Consult also your confessor, and act according to his advice. You will surely please the Heart of God by acting thus.

I recommend myself to your prayers, and I bless you in the Lord.

After the Roman edition.

LETTER 998.

To Father Francesco Antonio de Paola, President of the Houses in the Pontifical State.

Reasons why he cannot openly reject the *Regolamento*.— Why he cannot write directly to the Sovereign Pontiff.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

NOCERA DE' PAGANI, January 4, 1781.

My dear Don Francesco: Since the day, on which you promised to send me some good news in the near future, I have received nothing from you.

The feasts of the new year have now passed; tell me then, if there is a ray of light in our affairs. For myself, I am always in darkness, and I have no one here to console me.

Tell me whether you have received the letter that I have written in answer to yours.

Give me also news about the health of Signor Zuccari;[1] for you wrote me that he was unwell. Father Tannoia was somewhat intimate with him, but that has been of no benefit to us.

You wrote me, if I mistake not, that you desire to see Father Tannoia. I have just learned that he is sick. If you need him, write to me; I will send him to you, if you see any ray of hope.

The Pope is angry with us; but I should like to know what I could do to appease him. He wants us to reject the royal *Regolamento;* but what would we gain thereby? We should lose the favor of the king, or he would forbid us to give missions, and would order us to be driven from the four houses. All that I have already written to you.

1 L'Abate Zuccari was Pro-Secretary of the Sacred Congregation of Bishops and Regulars.

Answer me, I beg you, and give me some counsel; for I know not what to do nor what course to pursue.

I have not, however, lost the hope of being aided by the Blessed Virgin; it is she who will set afloat our poor damaged little vessel.

As I have told you, the requests for missions continue as formerly.

I have nothing more to say. Let us without intermission ask God not to abandon us.

I embrace you, and I salute all my confrères.

I would long ago have written directly to the Pope; but how can I do so? The king has forbidden us to write without the Chamber's permission, confirmed by the king himself.[1]

The Pope knows very well all the prohibitions that hamper us; he knows that we have no means of defending ourselves; why, then, does he keep us in his disfavor? May the will of God be done!

A letter, which you wrote to Father Cimino, has just been read to me. Trouble upon trouble (*here some words are missing*); hence, I can do only one thing at present, namely, I can hinder our subjects from having recourse to others.[2] Please intimate to your Community the same prohibition; for every recourse of the kind, whether on your

[1] This was a trial added to all the other trials. The saint could not treat freely and directly with Rome. If he had wished that a justification of his conduct should reach the Sovereign Pontiff, he would have been obliged to do this secretly through others, and without communicating the required documents, for these could not be sent from the kingdom. In a word, this would be the loss of the cause in advance.

[2] The separation of the houses of the Pontifical State from those of the kingdom had incensed many minds; hence there was a reciprocal accusation of having provoked this evil. It was feared that some malcontents might address themselves, either to the Pope, or to the king, to make known our troubles. This is the reason of

part, or on ours, may bring about our ruin. On the contrary, one can always remedy an evil, as long as one leaves the matter in suspense; but we must for some time negotiate by way of correspondence, in order to be able to come to a decision afterwards.

I will request Fathers Corrado and Pavone to call upon me to-morrow; but I fear that they will not respond to my appeal; for I see that they do not listen to me any longer. But enough; I will do all I can.

BROTHER ALFONSO MARIA, *Bishop.*

After the original preserved in the archives of Father General at Rome.

LETTER 999.

To Father Bartolomeo Mattia Corrado, Vicar-General, at Naples.

He requests him at once to forbid any appeal to the king.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

NOCERA DE' PAGANI, January 5, 1781.

Yesterday I received a letter from Father de Paola, in which he informs me that at Naples a petition to the king is being drawn up by Father Pavone, in the name of the Fathers of the kingdom. I beg you to call upon me, that we may together examine the line of conduct that must be followed, in order to hinder the complete destruction of the Congregation.

I expect you to come as soon as possible.

the measures, of which St. Alphonsus here speaks, and of the counsel which he gives to Father de Paola. One may, moreover, clearly see in the following letter the opinion of the saint on this subject.

Recommend me to our Lord and believe me, dear Father . . .

ALFONSO MARIA,
Rector Major.

[*P. S.*] Every appeal on our part may bring about our destruction. This is certain. Hence, in view of the circumstances, in which we are, I cannot excuse from mortal sin any one who would have recourse to such a means. Please, then, strictly to forbid our Fathers every appeal of the kind.

I repeat, I am expecting you.

After the original preserved in the archives of Father General at Rome.

LETTER 1000.

To Father Francesco Antonio de Paola.

He sends him a letter addressed to a prominent person, and dwells on the difficulties of the situation.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

NOCERA DE' PAGANI, January 10, 1781.

My dear Don Francesco: I have just received your letter, and it gives me a ray of hope; but this hope will not be solid, as long as the Pope is not convinced that we find ourselves between Charybdis and Scylla. If we reject the *Regolamento*, what do we gain but the accomplishment of our ruin?

Please have the enclosed letter sent to Signor Zuccari. I explained to him our affairs and our affliction at seeing ourselves punished without having committed any fault; but I hope that the Blessed Virgin will not abandon us.

Meanwhile, we should, as you say, have patience and put our trust in the divine mercy.

I cordially embrace you, and I beg you and all your companions to recommend me to our Lord.

It is impossible to obtain from the king the *Exequatur* of the Bull. On the other hand, to reject the royal *Regolamento*, is to alienate ourselves from the king, who may drive us from the four houses that he has given us, and forbid us to give missions in the kingdom.

I hope that Signor Zuccari will plead our cause with energy before the prelates of the Congregation. Be so good as to write to him also to favor our reunion. I hope that this reunion will take place before my death; this I hope to obtain with the help of the Blessed Virgin.

Please have the enclosed letter sent at once to Signor Zuccari; then write me all the news that you receive.

Let us place ourselves in the hands of God and the Blessed Virgin.

I again embrace you with the warmest affection, and I remain, dear Father,

Your very devoted servant and brother,

ALFONSO MARIA, *Bishop.*

[*P. S.*] You may, however, begin to give the missions at Sora, Aquino, etc. Here there is no want of work. The mission at Foggia is to be finished and will be followed by a mission at Nola; the latter will be more important yet, for the hamlets are more numerous than at Foggia.

When you write, always address yourself to me personally.

After the original preserved in the archives of Father General at Rome.

LETTER 1001.

To Mgr. Antonio Puoti, Archbishop of Amalfi.

Answer to a letter of good wishes for Christmas.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

NOCERA DE' PAGANI, January 15, 1781.

The letter that your Grace has done me the honor of writing to me on the 14th of last December, arrived only this day, the 15th instant, that is, a month after it had been sent.

Do not take it amiss, therefore, that I did not answer sooner, as I should have done in order to thank you for the good wishes for Christmas, and that I waited till now to offer you my thanks and my most sincere wishes.

I will to-day cheerfully acquit myself of this duty. If it is impossible for me, since the time is passed, to offer you the good wishes according to a pious and laudable custom, I can, at least, pray to God to grant your Grace, for many years to come, all the spiritual and temporal graces that you desire for the good of souls confided to your pastoral solicitude.

May your Grace give me your commands; it would be for me an honor to execute them. I also recommend myself to your holy prayers, and beg you to accept the expression of sincere and affectionate respect, with which I have the honor to be,

Your Grace's

Very devoted and grateful servant,

ALFONSO MARIA DE LIGUORI, *Bishop.*

After the original preserved at Amalfi in the family of Emanuele Volpe.

LETTER 1002.

To Father Bartolomeo Mattia Corrado, Vicar-General, at Naples.

He asks him for news.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

NOCERA, January 18, 1781..

You said in your letter that you had good news to announce to me.

Give me, I beg you, some explanation touching this good news, for I am receiving no consolation from any quarter.

I have already told you that Brother Leonardo has taken the twenty-five ducats on account of the large sum that is due to him. Here I am then in the same distress as before, in spite of the twenty-five ducats that were given me.

If you can send me some help, I should be very grateful to you; if not, I will have to wait for the monthly income from the College of Doctors, that is, till the end of January.

I bless you, my dear Father, and remain . . .

BROTHER ALFONSO MARIA,

Rector Major.

[*P. S.*] Please to tell me, whether you have the official letter, which the Grand Almoner has sent me, and in which the king declares that he accepts our Congregation under the title of the Most Holy Redeemer. Tell me, whether the original letter is in your hands or in the hands of the Fathers, for here we have only a copy of it.

After the original in possession of D. Floriano Bianchi Cagliesi, at Rome.

LETTER 1003.

To Father Francesco Antonio de Paola.

The same subject.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

[NOCERA, about January 20, 1781.]

It has been some time since I have received any news from you. Please write to me, if you have anything good to send me.

I have written to lawyer Zuccari; but as his vacation extended to January 15, he has not yet answered me. In your opinion, he had found means of aiding us to recover the faculties from the Penitentiary. I hope that since the time in which he spoke to you of this, he has again written to you on this subject.

I desire also to know, whether you have begun the missions at Sora, with which you have been charged.

You have written to me that the report of Cardinal Banditi has been sent to the Sacred Congregation, and also the letter in which I said that, to oppose the *Regolamento* of the king, would be to expose ourselves to the danger of being driven from the four houses and forbidden to give missions in the kingdom.

These two reports ought, then, to be in the hands of the Sacred Congregation by this time. They will probably be examined after vacation, and I hope that the Congregation will render a favorable decision.

This is all that I have to say for the present. Please recommend me to our Lord, as I do for you and for all your subjects.

BROTHER ALFONSO MARIA.

[*Postscript written by the hand of the saint.*] The re-

port of the Procurator de Leone is still pending; we must, therefore, be on our guard.

After the original preserved in the archives of Father General at Rome.

LETTER 1004.

To the Same.

He speaks to him of the royal decree which he expects, and of the great advantages that would result from the projected reunion.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

[NOCERA, January 29, 1781.]

Reverend and Dear Father: I received to-day, the 28th instant, a letter from you, and my long waiting is finally satisfied.

You tell me that you have always answered me; but I did not receive your answer. How that happened, I cannot explain. But let us come to our own affairs.

Our petition has been presented to the Grand Almoner, approved by him, then sent to the king. The decree that ratifies it, has not appeared; but there is nothing astonishing in this. According to my calculation, I will be satisfied if the decree appears in a month or two.

If this decree will be favorable to us, it will approve the oath of perseverance, of poverty and of Community-life. This is the aim of the petition addressed by us to the Grand Almoner and approved by him.

Affairs of this kind, I mean affairs of the supreme tribunal, demand great patience; and, according to my view, I will be satisfied if all will be finished in a month or in two months, as God wishes.

Before God, however, I protest a thousand times that in

this whole negotiation, I wish only what pleases God and what pleases him most.

As soon as I have possession of the decree, I will send you a copy of it and will have it legalized in the best possible way. It will, then, be incumbent on you, dear Father, to obtain the rest from the Pope. If I cannot now obtain the oath of perseverance, I shall write to you, and we might endeavor to overcome the difficulty by devising, as you say, another mode of proceeding.

. . . . It will be better if you speak to Father Tannoia, when you go to Benevento; you could then take measures in accord with Fathers Caione and Corrado.

Let all recommend me to the Lord, as I also pray to the Lord for all of you.

I embrace all most cordially, and remain, dear Father,

Your very devoted servant.

[*P. S.*] It is rumored here that you, the Fathers of the Romagna, have a foundation at Rome, or, at least, that you are on the point of establishing one. Tell me what truth there is in this news. Do not, I beg you, conceal anything, in order that we act in harmony; for we should continue to treat one another as brethren and as friends.

I hope that you do not fear that I am going to spoil your affairs.

If God wishes that we should remain divided from one another, I can only say, *May his holy will be done!* But, if we are to be re-united, it is necessary that the Congregation should be really one; if not, it will fail. Let us maintain the idea of one Rector Major and of two Vicars-General.

I have already one foot in the grave; if after my death there be two Rector Majors, the Congregation will be dissolved. Let us speak plainly: even though our reunion may not be established, the territory, in which we can save most souls, will not be Rome, but the kingdom of Naples,

where the abandoned people are so numerous, and where missions are so much liked. Hence, if we persist in our separation, the Congregation will never be able to continue to do the good that it has hitherto done, and after my death, it will end in being dissolved.

However, I ask only one thing from heaven; may that happen which pleases God and which pleases him most.

As for the decree that we are expecting, concerning the oath of perseverance and the other points, represented to the king, we should not be astonished that it has not yet appeared. According to my calculation, I will be satisfied if it is issued in a month; but, as soon as it is published, I will send you a copy.

Pray to God for me and write to me all the news. I embrace you in Jesus and Mary.

I have tried to find out what Father Cardone has written against me to Cardinal Zelada.

After inquiries had been made, nothing was found that could hurt us.

Believe me, dear Father,

Your very affectionate servant and brother,

ALFONSO MARIA, *Bishop.*

After the original preserved in the archives of Father General at Rome.

LETTER 1005.

To the Same.

He promises to do nothing that can interfere with the negotiations, and he expresses to him his firm hope of seeing the reunion brought about.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

NOCERA DE' PAGANI, February 8, 1781.

The past is past, and I can afford no remedy; but be assured that in future I will do nothing that can interfere with affairs. I will write neither report, nor letter; for I see that all that I do turns against me.

The Lord, I hope, will inspire the Pope with the thought of maintaining the Congregation on account of the great good that God has wrought by means of its labors. Continue, then, I beg you, and make every effort that the houses of the Congregation be united as they were before, or, at least, that those in the kingdom be tolerated.

As to the disagreements, from which you have to suffer on the part of our Fathers, try to be as patient as possible, and do not believe all that is reported to you.

Father Villani tells me that it is not true that a statement, opposed to mine, has been sent from here to Cardinal Zelada.

I am eighty-five years old; would to God that I could do all myself! I must necessarily have recourse to the help of strangers, but I take every possible precaution not to do anything that may turn against me, as has happened in the past.

At Naples certain negotiations have been opened, and, thank God, Father Corrado is carefully attending to them. I hope, however, that the Blessed Virgin will not abandon me.

Recommend me, meanwhile, to our Lord. Of late I

have had a heavy fever in the evening, accompanied by delirium; but these past seven days I have been well.

I most cordially embrace you, dear Father, and I pray to God to grant your wishes.

I learn with regret that Father Rastelli has refused to send you Masses; such a thing shall not take place again, for I will forbid him to act thus.

BROTHER ALFONSO MARIA DE LIGUORI, *Bishop.*

[*P. S.*] Be so kind as to send me all the good news that you can, concerning our affairs.

If the Pope declares himself against us, do not, on that account, despair of our reunion; for I hope that the Blessed Virgin will not abandon us, whatever may happen.

I continually recommend to all my companions the spirit of charity. Do this also, dear Father. God loves those who love charity.

Please write to lawyer Zuccari, and ask him to plead our cause warmly with the Pope; for the Sovereign Pontiff has favorable intentions, since he is reserving his final decision.

God be forever praised and blessed!

After the original preserved in the archives of Father General at Rome.

LETTER 1006.

To the Same.

He requests him to write to Rome to solicit a necessary delay.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

NOCERA, February 18, 1781.

My dear Don Francesco: I have learned that Father Sorrentino has written that the examination, or rather the decision, should be postponed, till the appearance of the royal decree, which we expect, concerning the oath of per-

severance of the subjects in the Institute. For this end we have taken proper measures at the court of Naples, and we have the firm hope that the decree will be favorable to us. When it appears, I will inform you of it immediately.

You will do well, dear Father, to notify those at Rome who are occupied with our interests; ask them not to decide till the affair at Naples has been concluded. This, I hope, will turn completely to our advantage; for the Grand Almoner has already declared himself openly in our favor on the question of putting all our subjects under an obligation of perseverance.

Earnestly ask the Sacred Congregation to suspend its decision till the decree at Naples has ratified our request, as we hope it will. As these are government affairs, we must have a little patience; but I repeat, we hope that the conclusion will be most happy, thanks to the protection of the Blessed Virgin.

I again embrace you.

Your very affectionate confrère,

ALFONSO MARIA.

[*P. S.*] We are not losing time here. The king has gone hunting, but his speedy return is expected.

After the original preserved in the archives of Father General at Rome.

LETTER 1007.

To his Niece Maria Teresa de Liguori, Pupil in the Monastery of S. Marcellino, at Naples.

He strongly exhorts her not to return to the world.

Live Jesus and Mary!

[NOCERA, the year 1781.]

I have now reached the age of eighty-five, and am too old to be useful to you; but, if you should need any service of me, write to me and I will do what I can.

In the meantime, recommend me to our Lord, and I entreat you, should any one ever counsel you to leave the monastery to return to the world, do not listen to him; for surely, if you did so, you would in a short time repent of the step you had taken. I send you another copy of the leaflet which I gave you before, that you may think of saving your soul. This is the most important thing, the most essential thing of all.

Take counsel of a good confessor; consult also some fervent nun of the monastery where you are.

I will ask the Lord to make you take the surest road that leads to heaven. And you should ask the Blessed Virgin to grant me the grace of a good death, for my end is near.

In your prayers, repeat without ceasing the following words: *My Jesus, I desire Thee, Thee alone, and nothing more.*

No more for the present. I bless you always, etc.

After an old copy.

LETTER 1008.

To a Pious Maiden.

He gives her wise counsels concerning the choice of a state.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

[NOCERA, 1781?]

I can neither read nor write on account of my great age and infirmities. I am, therefore, obliged to have the letters, that I receive, read to me and to dictate my answers.

I understand what you tell me on the subject of the choice of a state of life. You should pray to God without deciding in advance, either for the one state or for the other. Be sure that, if you thus remain indifferent, the Lord will place you, where you can most surely save your soul.

I will pray to the divine Mother, that she may always protect you; but do not forget to render me the same service, for you see that I am near my end.

Please accept the expression of my profound respect.

Your very devoted and grateful servant,

ALFONSO MARIA DE LIGUORI, *Bishop.*

[*P. S.*] I add that life in the world is a life full of peril, where one loves our Lord but very little.

After the original in possession of Don Giacomo d'Auria, at Naples.

LETTER 1009.

To Father Bartolomeo Mattia Corrado, at Naples.

He recognizes the intervention of heaven in the success of the petition addressed to the king.[1]

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

[NOCERA, February 24, 1781.]

The Lord has consoled us; may he be ever blessed! I did not myself count on this favor; but the intercession of the Blessed Virgin and of St. Joseph have obtained it for us.

Tannoia, Book iv., Chapter xxv.

[1] The following is the letter, in which Marquis de Marco announces to the saint the favor that had been granted:

"Your Lordship: The king having been informed that the missionaries of the Congregation founded by you had preached with so much zeal and at the cost of so much labor the holy work of the crusade, he has wished to give testimony of his royal benevolence by granting the favors which you have solicited in your petition.

"In the first place, his Majesty grants and permits that the missionaries of your Institute, who voluntarily devote themselves to the ministry of the missions, may take the oath of leading a poor life, a life perfectly in common, without prejudice, however, to the dominion they hold over their own patrimonial goods and the usufruct of those goods; for they can always dispose of them conformably to the

LETTER 1010.

To Father Celestino de Robertis, at Caposele.

He informs him of the success of the petition and orders a thanksgiving.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

[NOCERA, February 24, 1781.]

I send you a copy of the ordinance which we have received through a real favor from God.

Go to the choir to thank the Most Blessed Sacrament and the Blessed Virgin.

While we almost despaired of receiving such a favor, we obtained it by a miracle of the Madonna. Yes, truly, it is a great miracle!

Let us know how to show ourselves grateful to Jesus and Mary, so that Jesus and Mary may again set on foot regular observance, for we had greatly declined in this respect.

tenor of the prescriptions of the *Regolamento*, approved by his Majesty by virtue of the royal ordinance of the 22d of January, of last year. In the second place, his Majesty permits your missionaries to take the oath of perseverance in the Congregation, an oath from which the Head of the Institute can dispense for a reasonable cause. It is understood that this oath should be exacted only from the new subjects, who solicit admission, and full liberty is to be allowed to those who have already left the Institute. Finally, his Majesty has deigned to permit your missionaries to ask help from friends and benefactors during the harvest of grain and olives. As for the rest, it is to be understood that all the directions of the aforesaid *Regolamento* remain in full force, so also the sovereign decisions that they contain.

I communicate to your Lordship, in the name of the king, these favors and privileges, that you may make suitable use of them.

NAPLES, February 24, 1781. CARLO DE MARCO.

After a copy preserved in the archives of the Sacred Congregation of Bishops and Regulars, Case: *Liguorini* 1806.

Hereafter we must keep the whole Rule, as these troubles have permitted us to observe it but little.

I bless you, and I embrace you all, one after the other.

I wish you all to answer me and to tell me with what joy you received this favor, with what ardor you have thanked God for it.

Tannoia, Book iv., Chapter xxv.

LETTER 1011.

To Cardinal Francesco Saverio de Zelada, Prefect of the Sacred Congregation of Bishops and Regulars.

He sends him a copy of the royal ordinance and requests him to favor the projected reunion.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

NOCERA, February 27, 1781.

Your Eminence: I have the honor of sending you a copy of the royal ordinance, by which his Majesty on last Saturday deigned to approve the two oaths of poverty and perseverance.

Your Eminence, I hope, will be satisfied with seeing the extreme care with which I have protected the Rule. I trust, with the help of heaven, and if God grants me life, also to regulate the less important questions that remain to be decided; at least, my successors will do so after my death. The great difficulty concerning these essential points has been overcome, and God knows in what way; yet it has been finally accomplished. It is much more easy to obtain the other things; they are less important and cannot produce any great disturbance.

I recommend to your Eminence in a special manner the houses of this kingdom. I also recommend to you those of the States, for all are dear to me; but in this kingdom the wants are quite special, and a great deal of good is done by these houses.

I can do nothing more than pray to God to lavish his blessings upon your Eminence; and if the Lord is merciful to me, I will ask this favor for you in heaven.

I entreat you to protect in the Sacred Congregation this poor Institute, against which the fury of hell is let loose,[1] and please to accept the expression of profound respect, with which I have the honor to be

Your Eminence's

Very humble, devoted and grateful servant,

ALFONSO MARIA DE LIGUORI, *Bishop.*

After the original preserved in the archives of the Sacred Congregation of Bishops and Regulars; Case: *Liguorini* 1806.

[1] The Cardinal answered the saint as follows:

March 2, 1781.

"Monsignor: I will take care to send to the Sacred Congregation your Lordship's letter and a copy of the ordinance that accompanies it. They will be reported together and all will be put before Cardinal Ghilini who has been charged to examine the affair. As for the feeble part that I am allowed to take in this matter, I will have in view only the grave interests that are at stake for the profit of religion and of the faithful. Be perfectly reassured on this point.

I thank your Lordship for remembering me in your holy prayers; this is a pious service of which I confess I stand in need. I shall gladly render you all the good offices, that you do me the honor of asking of me. I beg you to accept with the expression of my profound and sincere esteem, that of my very affectionate respect."

LETTER 1012.

To Father Gasparo Caione, Rector of the House at Benevento.

He complains of the opposition which the reunion meets with at Rome on the part of the Fathers of the Pontifical States.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

NOCERA, March 12, 1781.

The procurator who is occupied with our affairs at Rome, has written to us that certain subjects of the Pontifical States are very active in their application to the Pope to prevent your union with the Fathers of the kingdom. Not without reason do we suspect that Father Leggio is one of these subjects, and that he is seconded by the authority of Father de Paola, the President.

You see how the Fathers of the States, after having made us labor a long time to obtain the ordinance relative to the oath of perseverance; after we have obtained from the king this favor by a kind of miracle of the Blessed Virgin; after the Fathers of the Romagna had themselves assured us that, when once this favor was obtained from the king, we should also obtain from the Pope the permission to take the oaths of perseverance, poverty and obedience in place of the vows; you see, I say, how the Fathers of the States now labor to hinder the reunion of the houses of our Institute!

Please make this matter plain to Father de Paola, as soon as he arrives at Benevento on the 14th of this month. I was amazed on hearing this news; for according to the good tidings which had been brought to us, the union was easily to be accomplished; but, with the excitement created by the Fathers of the Romagna, the Pope will, perhaps, refuse to grant us the reunion.

I beg all of you to endeavor to procure what you think will be for the greatest glory of God and for the good of the Congregation.

The rumor has also been spread, that the king had refused us the oath of perseverance; this is absolutely false.

Please write to me what you think about this matter. I affectionately embrace you.

ALFONSO MARIA DE LIGUORI, *Bishop.*

[*P. S.*] It is quite possible, that the Fathers of the Romagna will one day repent of their manner of acting. May God grant what will procure for him the greatest glory!

After the original preserved in the archives of Father General at Rome.

LETTER 1013.

To a Nobleman of Influence at the Court of Naples.

He solicits his protection against the attacks of Baron Sarnelli.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

NOCERA, March 12, 1781.

Your Excellency: According to the news from Naples, the Baron of Ciorani has again started the lawsuit which, so many years ago, he began against our Congregation and which has always been pending.[1] I, therefore, feel myself constrained to seek again the protection with which you formerly honored me.

The Father who will deliver to you the present letter, will give you all the desirable explanations.

I have felt too much the effects of your kindness to be obliged to explain to you at length the object of my request.

[1] The sentence was finally pronounced, on the 10th of April, 1783, in favor of the Congregation. Thus came to an end the vexations of Baron Sarnelli; they had lasted nearly twenty years.

I have made known to you my difficulty; this is enough, I know, to assure myself of your mediation. Your Excellency is filled with zeal and bears a tender love towards our work, this work that promotes God's glory and the good of so many poor souls.

I pray to our Lord to lend to your words his powerful assistance. May I soon receive good news!

I recommend myself to your prayers, and remain with respect and affection

Your Excellency's

Very devoted and grateful servant,

ALFONSO MARIA DE LIGUORI, *Bishop.*

After the original preserved in the archives of our house at Pagani.

LETTER 1014.

To Father Isidoro Leggio.

He begs him with tender charity to favor the union instead of hindering it.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

NOCERA, March 24, 1781.

My dear Father: While treating with Father de Paola of our reunion, I wrote him, that I had the firm hope that the king would permit us to lead a Community-life, to practise poverty and take the oath of perseverance. He assured me that, if the king granted this favor, all would be arranged between us.

Thank God, the king has given us what we asked. Such being the case, I beg you, dear Father, to do all in your power that the union, so much desired on both sides, be brought about.

Our Lord, I hope, will console us by permitting us to be united as we were formerly, and I do not believe that your Reverence will oppose this union.

I beg you, dear Father, to remember that, if you continue to maintain disunion among us, and if you gain your end, it will be impossible for you to enjoy a moment's happiness the rest of your life; for you would have before your eyes the spectacle of the Congregation thus divided. It will then be too late to remedy the evil.

For the love of our Lord, prostrate yourself at the feet of this divine Master, and reflect.

I embrace you, and I pray to God that he may make you accomplish his holy will. As for myself, I offer only one prayer, and repeat it continually: *My God, do not permit me to deviate in any measure from Thy holy will!* Such is my prayer while I find myself so near death.

Tannoia, Book iv., Chapter xxv.

LETTER 1015.

To Father Francesco Antonio de Paola, President of the Houses in the Pontifical State.

He explains to him why he has charged a lawyer and a procurator to defend his interests at Rome.—He requests him to recall Father Leggio from Rome.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

NOCERA, April 4, 1781.

My dear Don Francesco: I have received your letter of the 31st of last March.

It is true, I have engaged at Rome a procurator and a lawyer to look after our interests; but this is, by no means, in opposition to the reunion, which I, as well as all the Fathers of the kingdom, so ardently desire. I have done this only for the purpose of proving to the Sacred Congregation and to the Holy Father that the new *Regolamento*, such as it is at present, is, as to substance, absolutely conformable to the old Rule, and that in our negotiations at the court of Naples, we never pretended to deviate from the

decision rendered on this point by the Sacred Congregation and the Holy Father, the Pope.

We have engaged a procurator, because Father Leggio is continually applying to the Congregation and to the Pope, as we know that he is doing at the present time. If we had had a procurator sooner, affairs would have taken quite a different turn.

My dear Father Francesco, if you really desire the union, as you have so often declared, withdraw Father Leggio from Rome; we could then negotiate together this reunion, which is indispensable to the maintenance of our Congregation. Our procurator and our lawyer will not make the least objection on this point; on the contrary, they will do their utmost to favor the projected reunion. You have, therefore, no reason to complain; for, if the Cardinals and the Holy Father have once become well informed as to our proceedings, we shall more easily obtain the approbation of the *Regolamento.*

Once more, my dear Father Francesco, if you truly love the Congregation and wish a reunion, as I hope you do, recall Father Leggio, and prevent him from any longer troubling those that are negotiating our affairs.

I embrace you and remain . . . .

ALFONSO MARIA, *Bishop.*

[*P. S.*] A word more. Father Corrado has not been able to go to you, because he was hindered by the lawsuit of the baron.

After the original preserved in the archives of Father General at Rome.

LETTER 1016.

To Cardinal Tommaso Maria Ghilini, Reporter of the Cause.

He begs him to have the Pontifical decree of 1780 revoked, and solves the difficulties that have been raised on the subject of the *Regolamento*.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

NOCERA, April 14, 1781.

Your Eminence: By virtue of a decree of his Majesty, the king of Naples, issued on the 24th of last February, the members of our Congregation may hereafter take the oath of a perfect Community-life and of poverty, while retaining the ownership and usufruct of their patrimonial goods, of which they may always dispose. They may also take the oath of perseverance, from which they can be dispensed by the Head of the Congregation for a reasonable cause. I firmly believed that after this the Sacred Congregation would be willing to counsel His Holiness to declare null and void the decree of September of last year; for we have obtained from his Majesty the approbation of the entire Rule of Benedict XIV., and hence our Congregation is no longer menaced by the introduction of any substantial novelty, to the prejudice of the old observance.

This my conviction has been inspired by another reason, namely, by what happened in our two houses, established in the territory of Benevento. On learning that the royal ordinance put an end to the division, and that they thus escaped the danger of separation from the houses of the kingdom, which they justly feared, the members of these houses gave themselves up to loud demonstrations of joy.

I now learn that certain difficulties have arisen on the subject of this ordinance, both on account of the oath of perseverance, and on account of the oath of Community-life and of poverty.

These difficulties may arise from two causes: either from the inexact information addressed to the Sacred Congregation, or from an imperfect knowledge of the Rule of Benedict XIV.

If there is question of the oath of perseverance, this Rule clearly says (part ii., chapt. 2, § 4 and part iii., chapt. 2, n. 3), that the head of the Congregation can dispense from it. This is also what has been established by the royal ordinance.

As for the dominion over patrimonial goods, this same Rule (part i., chapter 1, § 1, n. 8, where it speaks of the vow of poverty) establishes that the priests of the Congregation possess this dominion; for our vows are not solemn vows of religion, but simple vows, made in a Congregation of secular priests, declared such by the Rule of which I speak. And the vow of poverty is not a vow of absolute poverty, but a vow of partial poverty.

As for the dominion over the usufruct of patrimonial goods, it also remains to the subjects, and the latter can dispose of it in favor of another, although they cannot use it for themselves.

Such is the interpretation which was given to the Rule in 1749, in the General Chapter, where it was accepted. It was confirmed by the General Chapter of 1764, and it is also the practice followed in the houses of the Roman States. If your Eminence has understood just the contrary (and this I do not believe) you may be sure that you have been led into error. The priests of the house at Scifelli, in the diocese of Veroli and those of the two houses at Benevento can give you testimony of this.

Such has always been, I have said, the interpretation of the Rule given by the General Chapters, and this Rule confers upon the General Chapters the power of dispensing for very grave reasons and in perpetuity, from any particu-

lar point: this one may read at the end of the Rule in the last paragraph.

All this being true, I do not understand why my confrères at Frosinone can insist on maintaining a separation, which is particularly fatal to them, and to the other houses of Veroli and Benevento.

I love all the houses, because they cost me a great deal of anxiety. In my opinion, which in the Roman States is treated as extravagant, this separation will lead to their ruin. I feel that God helps me to maintain the Rule of the Pope and the interests of peace, and that he enables me to govern these houses and to maintain their existence. I have finally seen in the last ordinance, obtained in times so difficult, a striking miracle of divine mercy. Hence, why should I not be afflicted by these dissensions, kept up without reason, when the Lord renders so visible to every one the protection that he bestows upon his work?

This work, so useful to souls, I earnestly recommend to the Most High; but I also place it under the protection of your Eminence. You, as I have since learned, are to examine the affair and to address your report to the Sacred Congregation. You will see whether I have told the truth.

Great joy has been afforded me by the last ordinance. Your Eminence, I trust, will deign to render it perfect by giving me your assistance, by obtaining for me the blessing of His Holiness for the houses of this kingdom and for me, by finally revoking the decree of last September. I will then say to the Lord with a most complete tranquillity and most profound serenity: *Nunc dimittis servum tuum in pace.* [Now Thou dost dismiss Thy servant in peace.—*Luke*, ii. 29.

I can only pray to God for your Eminence during the few days that remain to me to live here below. I will also do this in heaven, if the Lord is merciful to me.

Please accept the expression of profound and very humble respect, with which I have the honor to be,

Your Eminence's

Very humble, devoted and grateful servant,

ALFONSO MARIA DE LIGUORI, *Bishop.*

After the original preserved in the archives of the Sacred Congregation of Bishops and Regulars; Case: *Liguorini* 1806.

LETTER 1017.

To his Niece Maria Teresa de Liguori, Pupil in the Convent of S. Marcellino at Naples.

He counsels her to enter the religious life.

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

NOCERA, April 23, 1781.

I have received your letter. Yes, in compliance with your request I will continue to pray for your vocation. Besides, I remember that a few years ago, during the life-time of your father, you appeared to have the desire to unite yourself to Jesus Christ; there was then a time when you were not disposed to give yourself to the world.

I pray to the Lord to strengthen you in this happy disposition; for in the midst of the world it would be difficult for you to persevere in the grace of God.

What I say to you I have said to all the young persons that have come here to ask my advice. I have made them understand that, if they walk the road of the world, they would with difficulty reach eternal salvation, because the world at the present time is entirely corrupt.

As far as I know, ladies that frequent society, ordinarily lose the grace of God.

Fear, then, to abandon Jesus Christ on account of the world; for you would lose Jesus Christ and your soul. By the grace of God all those of my relatives, who died in my

time, have died a good death, and I hope to see them one day in Paradise; I also hope to be there with you.

Pray to God to give me a good death, which is not far off. Pray for me to the Blessed Virgin; I do not cease to pray for you. Recommend me continually to this good Mother, and she will obtain for me the graces that you desire. I bless you, and remain, etc.

After the Roman edition.

LETTER 1018.

To his Nephew, Giuseppe de Liguori.

He gives him some good advice.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

NOCERA DE' PAGANI, June 3, 1781.

I have read with pleasure your very kind letter, and I must thank you for your remembrance of me.

Only one thing, however, can console me; it is to learn that you are making progress in your studies, and that you are advancing every day in the fear of God.

Have at heart these two points: I recommend them to you.

I bless you, and remain, my dear Nephew,

Your very devoted uncle,

ALFONSO MARIA.

After the original in possession of his Eminence Cardinal Guglielmo Santelice, Archbishop of Naples.

LETTER 1019.

To the Sovereign Pontiff, Pius VI.

He earnestly requests him to restore to the houses of the kingdom the favors of the Holy See.

[Month of June, 1781.]

Most Holy Father: Monsignor de Liguori, Rector Major of the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer in the kingdom of Naples, prostrates himself at the feet of your Holiness and asks permission to expose to you the following facts.

In the year 1749, the undersigned author of the present petition, obtained from the Holy See a Brief, approving the Rules and Institute of this Congregation; but, notwithstanding all entreaties, he could never obtain for this Pontifical Brief the *Exequatur* of the king. Moreover, in 1752, the monarch of Spain, the sovereign of the kingdom of Naples, issued a decree concerning the houses of the Institute established in this kingdom and declared them incapable of acquiring and possessing in common, either immovable goods, or any kind of annual revenues. As for the goods acquired by them up to that time, the same decree intrusted the administration of them to the bishops of the dioceses, where these houses were established, and these prelates were ordered to furnish a daily support to all the members of the Institute as long as the work of the missions should continue. The king, finally, wished that every subject should be permitted to retain his personal and patrimonial goods, and the decree concludes by this declaration: *On these conditions, and on these conditions only, his Majesty permits the aforesaid priests to live together in the four houses of Nocera, Ciorani, Iliceto and Caposele, and in no other, provided they live in them as secular priests, and always subordinate to the Ordinaries of these*

places; for his Majesty does not regard these houses as colleges or Communities. There was nothing for the petitioners to do, but to submit to the law, emanating from the sovereign.

Later on, the houses of the kingdom were the object of several accusations. Our adversaries said: "The Fathers observe in these houses the Rule approved by the Holy See, which is not invested with the royal *Exequatur.* Besides, contrary to the intentions of his Catholic Majesty, they live there as if they had been constituted a Community or college; they have a Superior-General; special Superiors for the respective houses, officials of high and low degrees; they possess a novitiate and a house of studies; they take the simple vows of chastity, obedience, Community-life and poverty with the vow and the oath of perseverance; finally, they have obtained from the Holy See certain privileges." These different accusations having been referred by his Majesty to the fiscal lawyer, Don Ferdinando de Leone, the latter was of opinion that all this was in opposition to the orders of his Catholic Majesty, and he counselled the king to forbid us the reception of new subjects, to command the novices and students to return to their families, and to suppress among us the vows, the Rules, etc.

The houses which the Congregation possessed in the kingdom were, therefore, threatened with suppression. To prevent this evil, the undersigned was advised, as it seemed impossible to obtain the royal *Exequatur* for the Brief of the Holy See, to ask his Majesty for an approbation of the Rules alone. The execution of this project was confided to a member of this Congregation.[1] But the latter acted according to his own notions; and without consulting the other subjects of these houses, he presented a mutilated rule for the royal approbation. Hence the approbation

[1] Father Angelo Maione. He had as his companion Father Fabrizio Cimino.

given by his Majesty in the month of January, of last year, was defective.

These facts came to the knowledge of the Sacred Congregation of Bishops and Regulars, and the latter, by a decree of the month of last September, declared that the houses of the kingdom had forfeited the Apostolic approbation, and were deprived of the powers and faculties granted by the Holy See to this Institute. It appointed, moreover, a President for the houses established in the Pontifical States.

But, if certain fundamental points were defective in the *Regolamento*, of which I have spoken, the undersigned has now obtained from his Majesty the approbation of them as he did of the others, and the decree of the 24th of February, of this year, which I have the honor to transmit to your Holiness, gives testimony of this. The rule approved by the king is, therefore, substantially in conformity with that which has received the approbation of the Holy See; the differences regard only details of little importance, as your Holiness will easily be convinced by reading the subjoined parallel columns, in which is stated what is substantial in the two Rules.

After having thus preserved the houses of the kingdom from imminent suppression, the undersigned now appeals to your paternal clemency. He earnestly conjures you to restore to him, and to the aforesaid houses, the old favors of the Holy See. He, finally, trusts, that your high intelligence and your paternal love will find means of re-establishing this Congregation in its original form.[1] Souls

[1] All the hopes of the saint were doomed to disappointment. The Holy Father, obliged to defend his Apostolic authority against the unjust usurpations of regalism, did not wish to yield in any point. What was to be a law for a religious Congregation was the Rule approved by the Holy See and not a royal *Regolamento*. Hence the separation was maintained. It was even definitively established by a rescript of the Sacred Congregation of Bishops and Regulars under

will thereby gain more advantages, and the members will themselves continue with greater success their apostolic labors. In recognition of such a favor, *they will pray to God, etc.*

Rule approved by the Sovereign Pontiff, Benedict XIV.

In § 2 and 3 of this Rule, Roman edition:

"The simple vows of chastity and obedience are prescribed."

The Same Rule approved by the King, but under another Form, in 1780.

In chapter 1, n. 14, it is said:

"Every one who wishes to live in this Congregation, shall bind himself by oath, after a certain time of trial, to observe with all exactness the virtues of chastity and obedience."

Remark.

On this point the Rule approved by the king perfectly agrees with the Rule approved by the Sovereign Pontiff. For the promises made with an oath, such as the king approves, although they are not called vows, are, nevertheless, by their nature true, simple vows. It is, in fact, the common opinion of theologians that promises made with an oath are always true, simple vows, as long as they are made to God with the intention of acknowledging one's self guilty of a fault in transgressing them.

Rule approved by the Sovereign Pontiff.

Poverty and Community-life.

In chapter 1, § 1, n. 1, we read:

"The subjects of this Congregation shall lead a perfect Community-life."

Rule approved by the King.

Poverty and Community-life.

In chapter 1, n. 10, we read:

"Every subject is obliged, by an explicit and a formal promise with an oath, to leave

date of August 24, of this year: *Standum in decisis per Sanctissimum sub die 23 Septembris . . . Et amplius non admittantur preces.* (The previous decisions rendered by the Holy Father, September 23, should stand . . . and let no further petitions be received.)

In n. 4: "Although every subject of the Congregation should be promoted to Orders under the title of his patrimony, yet the use of this patrimony is forbidden to all. This prohibition also extends to the life-annuities that the subjects may have, and to every kind of property that they may possess. Hence, all the revenues that the subjects derive from whatever belongs to them, under whatever title, shall be administered and expended by the Superiors."

to the house, which may be assigned to him as his residence, not only the small contribution furnished to each subject by his Majesty for the maintenance of the missions, but also all his Mass stipends, his life-annuity, if there is any, and every other revenue that may be received by them. This promise shall, however, leave intact, for all subjects the ownership and usufruct, either of their patrimonial goods, or of every other property, which they may acquire in particular, and which reverts or can revert to them. They may according to their own will dispose of all these, either during their life-time, or at their death, in favor of those who can acquire them. It is, however, forbidden to every one to have the use of the things which belong to him, without the permission of the Superiors."

By his ordinance of February 24, 1781, the king gives his consent "that the missionary priests *take an oath* of leading a life perfectly common and poor, without prejudice, however, to their own patrimonial goods; for they can always dispose of them conformably to the articles of the *Regolamento*, approved by the decree of his Majesty, dated January 22, of last year."

Remark.

On the subject of poverty one sees no difference between the Rule approved by the Sovereign Pontiff and the rule approved by the king. Both forbid the subjects to use, without the permission of the Superiors, the revenues of the goods which they possess; both permit them to dispose of the ownership of their goods.

Rule approved by the Sovereign Pontiff.

Perseverance.

In chapter 1, § 4, page 18, we read as follows:

"To the vows, above-mentioned, the members of the Congregation shall add the vow of perseverance. By this vow they oblige themselves to live in the Congregation till death, and not to ask for a dispensation from them except from the Sovereign Pontiff or from the Rector Major."

In Part iii. *ch. 2, n. 3, p. 17, we read:*

"They shall be admitted (the young men who have made their novitiate) to profession by making the simple vows of chastity, poverty and obedience with the vow and oath of perseverance in favor of the Congregation that accepts them. These vows and the oath cannot be relaxed nor be dispensed from, except by the Sovereign Pontiff or the Rector Major; and it is always on this condition that they are made."

Rule approved by the King.

Perseverance.

Chapter 1, n. 14, gave to each subject the liberty to leave the Congregation. But the aforesaid ordinance of February 24, 1781, is thus expressed: "His Majesty permits these missionaries to take the oath of perseverance in the Congregation,—an oath from which they can be dispensed by the head of the Congregation for a reasonable cause. This oath, it is understood, should be exacted only from new subjects who seek admission; the old subjects remain perfectly free to do so or not."

Remark.

Here also one does not see any difference between the two Rules. In the Rule approved by the Sovereign Pontiff the vows and oaths are reserved to the Pope or to the Rector Major; and in the rule, which has received the king's approbation, no such reservation is mentioned. But there is no difference; for the vows that are made in the Congregation are vows and oaths in favor of a third party; now every vow, every oath made in favor of a third party, is by its nature reserved to the Sovereign Pontiff.

After the original preserved in the archives of the Sacred Congregation of Bishops and Regulars; Case: *Liguorini* 1806.

LETTER 1020.

To Father Bartolomeo Mattia Corrado.

He requests him to ask the Sovereign Pontiff for a favor.[1]

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

NOCERA DE' PAGANI, June 28, 1781.

My dear Father: According to the primitive Rule, I am bound in regard to the Pope by my vow of poverty. I desire to observe this vow, as I am obliged to observe it. I should then in my special doubts and in difficult cases, have to depend on the Superior of the Congregation. But, at present, I have in the Institute no Superior on whom I can depend in what concerns my vows. Hence I am a prey to terrible disquietudes, and the devil profits by them to tempt me to despair.

Far from me be the thought of offending God in any way! Therefore, I do not wish to give myself up to despair; hence I beg you to ask the Pope for a special audience, and make known to him the trouble that agitates me. I

[1] Father Corrado was on the point of going to Rome with Father Francesco de Leo to negotiate the affair of a reunion.

am a prey to continual disquietude, for my present state arouses in me innumerable troubles of conscience, and I should weary His Holiness, were I to make them known to him.

I, therefore, request you to ask the Holy Father, whether I may in all my doubts depend on the judgment of my confessor; [1] I shall thus be delivered from this state of continual agitation and anguish, which is worse than death.

Beg His Holiness to grant me this favor, and remind him that there was a time when his goodness gave me some access to his heart. Request him, therefore, to grant what I desire, and believe me, dear Father . . .

BROTHER ALFONSO MARIA,
Rector Major.

[*P. S.*] My agitation, or rather, my interior pain, was so great to-day that the doctor found my appearance entirely changed, so much have I suffered. I have but a short time to live.

After the original preserved in the archives of Father General at Rome.

LETTER 1021.

To the Rector of the house at Iliceto.

He sends him a subject for the novitiate.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

NOCERA, July 13, 1781.

My dear Father Rector: Father Papa will call upon you with a young man by the name of Biagio Antonio Altieri.

1 Father Corrado applied not to the Pope but to the Cardinal Penitentiary who answered: *Acquiescat suo confessario* (Let him refer everything to his confessor).

The latter has been received as a postulant. Admit him to the novitiate.[1]

I bless you and remain, dear Father . . .

ALFONSO MARIA,
Rector Major.

After the original preserved in the *Piccola Casa* della Divina Providenza in Turin.

LETTER 1022.

To his Niece Maria Teresa de Liguori, Pupil in the Monastery of S. Marcellino, at Naples.

He rejoices to hear that she has decided to embrace the religious life.

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

NOCERA, July 30, 1781.

I have experienced great consolation at seeing that you are determined to carry out without delay your well-matured resolution of consecrating yourself to Jesus Christ. May the Lord strengthen your good will!

Since, as I have heard, it is thought necessary that you should leave the monastery before the accomplishment of your resolution, I willingly consent that you should do so. Consequently, as soon as a suitable house has been found for you, I will write to Signor N. and to Signor N.,[2] to give their consent to your entrance into religion, as well as to your temporary residence in the house that has been selected, and to furnish you with all that you may need.

In the meantime recommend yourself to Jesus Christ; do not give up prayer, and be convinced that you cannot make a better choice. This I know by experience, having attained so advanced an age.

[1] The young man began his novitiate on August 15, and made his profession on July 21, of the following year.

[2] Probably Signori Vespoli and Gavotti, guardians of young Teresa.

Pray to Jesus Christ for me, and receive my blessing.

After the Roman edition.

LETTER 1023.

To Father Diodato Criscuoli, Rector of the House at Ciorani.

He wishes the students to observe the old Constitution.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

PAGANI, August 9, 1781.

My dear Father Diodato: I believed that the Prefect of students made the latter observe the old Constitution; but I have some doubt on this point. Please tell Father Prefect that this Constitution should be entirely and punctually observed, because such is my wish.

I give you my blessing and I remain . . .

After the Roman edition.

LETTER 1024.

To his Niece Maria Teresa de Liguori, Pupil in the Monastery of S. Marcellino, at Naples.

He rejoices to learn that, before entering the convent, she will not be exposed to the dangers of the world.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

NOCERA, August 19, 1781.

I am very glad that the Duchess of Bovino, my old patroness, has been willing to receive you into her house during your temporary absence from the convent.[1]

[1] It was customary for those that aspired to the religious state, to leave for some time the monastery where they had received their education. Father Tannoia in his *Life of St. Alphonsus*, speaks in the following terms of the views of the saint in regard to his niece: "Young Teresa, before entering the novitiate, was to remain for some time outside of the monastery. She might have gone to her family; but Alphonsus was opposed to this, and he begged the Duchess of Bovino, his penitent, to receive her into her house. 'If

I, therefore, wrote to her at once a long letter, thanking her for the great kindness that she has shown to me, the poor cripple, who am kept in my chair awaiting death, which is near.

Prepare yourself, then, to celebrate with joy the day of your espousal to Jesus Christ. I should very much like to be present, when you receive the habit, but God deprives me of this consolation on account of my old age.

However, I shall not omit to recommend you to the Lord, so that you may be content and happy. On your part pray to the Blessed Virgin that she may obtain for me a happy death.

I conclude by offering my regards to Sister Marianna, and by asking her also to recommend me to Jesus Christ.

After the original in possession of Don Giuseppe Montuori, parish priest of S. Liborio, at Naples.

I intrust her to her relatives,' he said, 'she will at once be in the midst of a thousand dangers by visits, theatres, staying up at night, etc. She will have a *cicisbeo*, who will follow her everywhere,* and the latter may make her lose the love of God and the thought of entering the convent.'"—The saint's niece left the monastery on February 16, 1782, but, faithful to her resolution, she re-entered on the 16th of June and persevered in her vocation till her death.

* The custom, to which the saint refers, had not always the odious sense which the laxity of morals but too often justified. It had been introduced into Naples during the foreign occupation, and had positively no other object than to permit persons of rank to go to church without fear.—Celano, *Curiosit. de Naples.*

LETTER 1025.

To Sister Brianna Carafa, in the Monastery of S. Marcellino at Naples.

He thanks her for an act of kindness and compassionates her on her brother's death.

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

NOCERA, September 20, 1781.

The kindness you exhibited towards my niece, by arranging for her stay with the Duchess of Bovino, before taking the religious habit in your monastery, is the effect of your goodness of heart. Hence I cannot but express to you my warmest thanks.

I am sure that, owing to your gentle persuasion and judicious advice, she will not only persevere, but will increase in the desire of being united with Jesus Christ.

It is with pain that I learn the death of your brother—the only one that you had. You have no need of my advice to be resigned to the divine will.

I see very well that God wishes to purify you in this world; and believe me, in order that you may succeed in the accomplishment of God's design upon you, there is no surer way than the way of the cross.

The best mortification is that which God sends; and such are the corporal infirmities when we bear them with patience and with joy.

In regard to the vocation of your niece, this is a matter that must be settled with God. If she remains firm in her resolution, you have nothing else to do than to exhort her to conduct herself well, and to walk with the fear of God in the state that she determines to embrace.

I conclude by offering you my services for every case in which you may judge that I may be useful to you; and

while recommending myself to your prayers, I remain with the highest esteem,

Your very humble servant,

ALFONSO MARIA DE LIGUORI, *Bishop.*

After an old copy.

LETTER 1026.

To Father Francesco Antonio de Paola.

Joy at the success of the Congregation in the Pontifical States.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

NOCERA DE' PAGANI, October 25, 1781.

I hear with joy of the favors that the Pope has conferred upon you, and I pray God to continue to be favorable to you for his greater glory.

I participate in your joy at the favors the Pope has conferred upon you at Velletri and at other places; I advise you to profit by the favors of the Pope, to procure the glory of God in all places.

I have heard them speak of missions at Sabina; introduce them there and wherever you can.

Your success consoles me, because I hope that it will serve to extend the glory of God. When you make any further progress, let me know, that I may thank God for it, as I will always do when you succeed. Pray to God for me and for our brethren, in order that all may be employed in serving Jesus Christ.

Pray for me for a happy death; I shall not live much longer; and I pray that God may make you continually increase in his love and that he will send you new foundations, as well as subjects.

Very many come to us here at Naples and also in Sicily; may all be for the glory of God! I pray that Jesus Christ may bless you all, you and all your houses and companions.

Send me some news of your progress, that I may thank God for it.[1]

May Jesus and Mary bless you all!

ALFONSO MARIA DE LIGUORI.

After the original preserved in the archives of Father General at Rome.

LETTER 1027.

To the Priest Don Gaetano di Geronimo, at Naples.

He disapproves a nun's design of entering another Order.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

NOCERA DE' PAGANI, November 12, 1781.

I would gladly encourage the nun, of whom you speak, and would approve of her design of entering the Order of the Carmelites, if this could be done without noise and without opposition. But as this Sister is already professed, the opposition will be so great that it will be impossible to resist it.

I do not enter into details as regards these difficulties; but I foresee that they will be insurmountable, and the attempt to carry out such an intention, will have no other result than to create for the nun innumerable crosses and embarrassments.

I would, therefore, counsel her to abandon this design and simply to begin a life more solitary and more united with God; otherwise I fear that she will be a prey to dreadful disquietude for the rest of her life.

[1] It is needless to remind our readers that at the moment in which the saint wrote these lines and showed so touching a solicitude in regard to the houses in the Pontifical States, he himself deplored the sad separation of which we have spoken. Nevertheless, St. Alphonsus always proved himself a most loving Father of the Congregation, which he cherished as the apple of his eye. It is the part only of the saints to seek thus sincerely in all things the glory of God.

I always profess the greatest esteem for the Order founded by St. Teresa. I have written many pages in praise of the Carmelites; hence it cannot enter the mind of any one that I wish to oppose these nuns.

What I have said, I have said for the good of the person of whom you speak. If she acts otherwise, the injury to her will be considerable, and there will be no advantage.

However, enlightened persons are found at Naples, who can more easily examine the circumstances of the case; the nun may consult them more profitably.

I conclude by begging you to recommend me to our Lord.

Please accept, my dear Sir, the expression of my profound respect,

Your very devoted and grateful servant,

ALFONSO MARIA DE LIGUORI, *Bishop.*

After an old copy.

LETTER 1028.

To Father Francesco Antonio de Paola, President of the Houses in the Pontifical States.

He is pleased to hear of the foundation of two new houses in the Pontifical States.—Salutary advice in regard to missions.

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

NOCERA, November 23, 1781.

Yesterday, the 22d instant, I received with great consolation your esteemed letter of the 14th instant, in which you give me the details of the two foundations of Foligno and Gubbio, as also of that of Rome.

This has given me great consolation, for it will be not only a means whereby you can be of mutual assistance, but it will give you a new field in which you can give many missions, so much needed in these days, when corruption

exists everywhere. Do not forget always to preach the eternal truths, death, hell, judgment and paradise.

I am much pleased that fifteen novices have been received; for you will now require a greater number of subjects, on account of these new establishments. Hereafter I will send all my answers to Rome, as you desire.

I thank you for the *Ave Maria* that you recite every evening for me; apply it to me especially for a happy death.

I thank our good God that he has used me to begin so much good that has since been effected through you, and especially through the Pope, whom God has deigned to console in so many ways.

I rejoice that you are shortly going to give missions at Foligno and at Gubbio. I hope that God will use you to increase his glory, and I will not cease to pray to him for this end.

I feel bound to tell you several very useful things, and I entreat you to suggest them to your companions.

Recommend them to preach on the great means of prayer; it is a subject on which I have written a whole work. God wishes to diffuse grace, but he wishes to be solicited for it; he that does not pray, does not obtain anything.

Constantly recommend devotion to Mary to all that wish to be saved.

Arrange matters so that the sermon on the Blessed Virgin be delivered every Saturday, and that it be never omitted during the missions, and that it be shown how all stand in need of recommending themselves to her by reciting the *Ave Maria*, especially during temptations. These things appear to some persons only fit for devout women, but whatever may be said, they may save many souls.

Several Congregations have introduced the custom of giving during missions a sermon on the Blessed Virgin; this is done by the missionaries of St. Vincent de Paul. We

must adopt the same practice in the retreats, whether we preach to nuns or to priests.

I embrace you and I pray to God to grant that you and your companions may be wholly his.

Your very affectionate aud grateful servant,

ALFONSO MARIA,
of the Most Holy Redeemer.

After the original preserved in the archives of Father General at Rome.

LETTER 1029.

To Father Giovanni Battista di Costanzo.

He thanks him for having accepted an office which others had refused.

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

NOCERA, November 26, 1781.

My dear Father Giovanni: I trust that Jesus Christ will reward you for the consolation that you have afforded me by accepting the charge of Lector of philosophy.

I was in great trouble on this account. From various quarters subjects had joined our Congregation, and my anxiety increased in proportion as their number augmented, because at this time,[1] when teachers are so rare, I could find no one to instruct them.

I was in dire affliction, not knowing in my embarrassment to whom to have recourse. You have come to my relief by informing me that you have accepted the charge of instructing these young people. I do not know how those can feel easy before God that have refused this employment, since it was evidently his will and good pleasure.

Hence I bless you and thank you very much; I pray to the Lord to grant you great consolation for this act of obedience.

[1] Several Fathers had withdrawn to the houses in the Pontifical States through love of the Rule approved by Benedict XIV.

I bless you and thank you again and again.

After the Roman edition.

LETTER 1030.

To Sister Maria Angela Rosa Graziano, in the Monastery del SS. Rosario, at Naples.

He censures the use of figured music in convents; regrets the separation.

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

NOCERA DE' PAGANI, November 29, 1781.

In the first place, I thank you for having remembered me.

I learn with pain, however, that there are those that wish to introduce among you the figured chant. Besides the expense that would be incurred in keeping a teacher, much injury to the soul would result therefrom, into the details of which I refrain from entering for fear of troubling your mind. This kind of chant pleases the devil, but not God.

Yes, there is among us something that is to be regretted, for several of our confrères have wished to separate from us. However, we pray to God for them, and they will not fail also to pray for us; and thus we hope that both they as well as we shall please God and sanctify ourselves.

Never forget to recommend me to the Blessed Virgin; I shall not fail to do the same for you.

In all these troubles, of which you complain, address fervent prayers to Mary, and she will remedy them. I pray to Jesus Christ to give you his true love; and never cease to ask for this love, if you wish to make progress.

May Jesus Christ bless you and me; pray to him for me when you receive Communion; and herewith I bless you in the name of Jesus Christ.

As regards those of our confrères that have left us, we

are at peace with them, and we keep up friendly correspondence with one another.

Your very humble servant,

ALFONSO MARIA DE LIGUORI.

After an old copy.

LETTER 1031.

To his Niece Maria Teresa de Liguori, Pupil in the Monastery of S. Marcellino, at Naples.

He encourages her in her design to consecrate herself to God.

Live Jesus!

NOCERA, January 3, 1782.

I thank you for the wish that you have expressed in regard to my temporal and spiritual happiness. It is the same wish that I have in your regard, as you are a soul purchased with the blood of Jesus Christ.

I rejoice very much at the resolution that you have taken to embrace the religious life; endeavor to make an entire and a perfect sacrifice of yourself to the Lord. Indeed, everything in this world is but vanity. Happy the soul that knows how to save itself!

Recommend me to Jesus Christ and to his holy Mother. I bless you with my whole heart, and remain etc.

After the Roman edition.

LETTER 1032.

To Father Giovanni Battista di Costanzo.

Concerning studies.—Eulogy of Abelly's Dogmatic Theology.

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

NOCERA, January 17, 1782.

I have learned with pleasure that you have begun the teaching of philosophy, and that the students follow your instructions perfectly.

I hope that they will derive greater profit from their studies, than the former students did, because your lessons are given in better order. When you begin to teach theology, do not depart from Abelly.

Mgr. [Giulio] Torni thought very highly of this author, because he explains things clearly, methodically and briefly. Now continue to instruct these young men assiduously; I recommend them to you, and I bless you all.

ALFONSO MARIA,
Rector Major.

After the original preserved in the archives of Father General at Rome.

LETTER 1033.

To his Niece Maria Teresa de Liguori, Pupil in the Monastery of S. Marcellino, at Naples.

He gives her some advice in regard to her stay in the world.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

NOCERA, February 18, 1782.

I remember that the time has come for you to leave the monastery, to return to it again when you will take the habit. You will now go to live for some time with the

Duchess di Bovino. I, therefore, recommend to you the holy fear of God, modesty, and detachment from the things of this world.

What I have most at heart is, that you do not go to balls and the like amusements, which are all extremely dangerous. Above all do I beg you not to frequent the academy.[1] The duchess, without doubt, will agree with me on this point. Tell her what I think, and you will see how far she is from approving of pleasures so perilous to your soul.[2]

I pray to Jesus Christ that he may deign to give you the grace that, on your return to the monastery, you may be yet more modest and reserved than you were at your departure.

Give my regards to the duchess.

I bless you. . .

After the Roman edition.

1 This is the name that was given to the reunions, in which the time was devoted to singing, music, games, reading, and conversation.

2 The young niece and the duchess complied with the wishes of the saint. They profited by this occasion only to visit him for whom they professed so profound a veneration. St. Alphonsus gave at this time a remarkable proof of his love of poverty. "He was," says Very Rev. Father Berruti in his work, *Lo Spirito di S. Alfonso*, "extremely faithful in asking the necessary permission of the local Superior, when he wished to dispose of any object whatsoever. His niece Teresa, when paying him a visit before embracing the religious life in the monastery of S. Marcellino, expressed the desire of having as a remembrance of her holy uncle a small picture of our Lady of Good Counsel. Alphonsus answered that he could not dispose of it on account of his vow of poverty; and Father Villani himself had to forward the present to the young person."

LETTER 1034.

To Sister Brianna Carafa, in the Monastery of S. Marcellino at Naples.

The way of the cross is the surest and shortest to attain salvation.

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

[Nocera], March 9, 1782.

I have become like a corpse: I am no longer in a condition to give advice or to answer letters. However, as you are singularly afflicted, I write you a few lines.

You have never been so sure as you are now; for the way of the cross is the surest and shortest way to attain salvation.

It is on this road that the saints have walked, and the Chief of the Predestined, Jesus Christ, espoused the cross from the first moment of his life.

His holy Mother also passed her days in the midst of crosses.

Take courage; do not be cast down. Look often at Calvary, at heaven, at hell, in order to animate yourself to suffer with patience.

Fear nothing; Jesus Christ loves you now more than ever; and when you think that he is far away, he is near you.

It is true that you do not feel his presence; what does it matter? He assists you by hidden means.

The only thing that I ask of you, is, to continue as you have done, and not to omit your ordinary devotions, even when you perform them only with your higher will. If you do not lose courage, you will be saved, and you will be saved as a great saint.

The pills that you have to take are, I see, bitter to the taste; but they will do you good; you must swallow them

and be generous. Come, then! do not be uneasy, and do not lose any more time in useless anxiety.

Recommend me to Jesus Christ, as I myself do for you. I bless you, and remain etc.

After the Roman edition.

LETTER 1035.

To the Same.

He recommends to her Christian indifference and prayer.

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

NOCERA, May 15, 1782.

I have already written to you that I am no longer in a condition to read or answer letters.

I desire that you should preserve calmness when anything is said to you. You are always speaking to me about your niece, and you say that you are anxious about her. Keep yourself in holy indifference in regard to the matter by recommending her to Jesus Christ and to the Blessed Virgin, in order that she may know and may accomplish the divine will.

As for your interior, it is not necessary for you to know that you are going on well; we must advance, notwithstanding the darkness.

Be courageous, and fear nothing. Do not lose sight of Jesus Christ, whose life was a continual martyrdom; unite your sufferings to his.

Remember me. I bless you, and remain etc.

After the Roman edition.

LETTER 1036.

To his Niece Maria Teresa de Liguori, in the Palace of the Duchess di Bovino.

He reassures and encourages her in her design of embracing the religious life.

Live Jesus!

NOCERA, May 25, 1782.

I have left everything to Signor Gavotti in regard to the time in which you should receive the habit. That I regarded as quite proper, he being your tutor, and the reasons given being very weighty. But you must be convinced that I, by no means, stated that you had changed your mind; I said just the contrary.

Offer to God your desire; this offer will be very profitable to you.

Take courage, and recommend yourself to our Lord and to the Blessed Virgin.

My regards to the duchess.

I bless you and remain. . .

After the Roman edition.

LETTER 1037.

To Father Francesco Antonio de Paola.

Sincere affection of the saint towards his brethren in the Pontifical States.

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

NOCERA DE' PAGANI, June 21, 1782.

I thank you, my dear Father, and your companions for your remembrance of me in your prayers; I assure you that I will not forget you.

I thank you and your companions with all my heart for

your intention of applying the Masses [1] after my death for the repose of my soul.

Write me a few lines when you can, because your letters comfort me.

I am also comforted by the novitiate at Scifelli, which contains twenty-two novices. May God render you more and more fervent in his love. I thank him for having caused your houses to prosper and permitted that I should die in humiliation, for this humiliation is a sign that he wishes to pardon my sins.

I thank you again for your remembrance of me.

I repeat, I do not cease to recommend you to Jesus Christ, and to pray that he may fill you with his holy love.

I also entreat you to ask Jesus and Mary for this love for me, and to pray that God may enable me to die full of confidence in his Passion.

The young men around me edify me by their fervor.

Once more let me beg you to recommend me to Jesus and Mary, and I will not cease to pray to them for you all, that they may fill you with their love. I embrace you, and all your companions.

ALFONSO MARIA.

After the original preserved in the archives of Father General at Romé.

1 The Masses which, according to the Rule, had to be celebrated by each priest for the deceased Father General.

LETTER 1038.

To his Niece Maria Teresa de Liguori, Novice in the Monastery of S. Marcellino, at Naples.

Joy that he feels at the thought that she will soon take the religious habit.

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

NOCERA, September 16, 1782.[1]

Your last letter afforded me so great a joy that I could not restrain my tears. Only I feel sorry that I cannot be present when you receive the habit.

If God permitted me to go to the convent on that day, I surely could do nothing but weep; however, the Lord does not wish to give me this consolation.

Meanwhile I do not cease to recommend you to Jesus Christ, that he may entirely inflame you with his holy love, and may render you worthy to go one day to see him face to face in heaven.

I beg you to recommend me frequently to Jesus Christ, so that he may grant me a good death; for I am in great fear about my salvation on account of the sins that I have committed. I bless you, and I will not fail, every time that I communicate, to ask Jesus Christ that he may give you the grace to belong entirely to him.

I send you this little picture of the Blessed Virgin,[2] that

[1] The Roman edition gives the date September 16, 1781; but the true date seems to us to be September 16, 1782.

[2] One cannot read without interest the account of another picture of the Blessed Virgin, sent later on by the saint to his niece. We borrow the account from the work of Very Rev. Father Berruti, given in his book *Lo Spirito di S. Alfonso:* "The niece of the saint, had taken the religious habit, when there appeared on her foot a wound which defied all the skill of the physicians, and being of a cancerous nature, would have been an insurmountable obstacle to her profession. The rumor had already spread in the

you may show your gratitude to her, and may never cease to recommend yourself to her protection.

After the Roman edition.

LETTER 1039.

To Father Alessandro de Meo.[1]

He requests him to direct some missions and addresses to him an important recommendation.

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

NOCERA, October 29, 1782.

My dear Don Alessandro: Some small missions are to be given with the limited number of Fathers of your house. I beg

monastery that she would not be allowed to make the vows; she had even been advised to return to the world. Afflicted beyond measure, Teresa de Liguori wrote to her saintly uncle, manifested to him her trouble, and asked the help of his prayers, so as not to be forced to leave the convent. As an answer to her letter the saint sent her a picture of Our Lady of the Seven Dolors, and recommended that it should be applied to the wound and that she should fervently pray to the Blessed Virgin. The young novice obeyed, and had scarcely applied the picture to the wound, when all dangerous symptoms disappeared, the wound closed without leaving after it any pain, and the nuns, assured of her complete cure, admitted her to profession. The astonishing circumstances of this miracle did not, however, stop here; for the effect of this wonderful favor continued for seventy years, as the saint's niece, then aged fifteen and a half, died when eighty-six years old. I was her confessor for some time, and as I knew of the miracle wrought in her favor by the saint, I greatly feared for her, when I learned that the old wound had re-opened (this was some months before her death); for I believed that, if the cancerous secretion resumed its course, after having been miraculously interrupted during seventy years, it would now deprive her of the life that had been miraculously preserved to her. I was right; for the malignant humor spread through her whole system, and Mother Teresa, who had always enjoyed good health, died soon afterwards."

[1] Father de Meo, one of the brightest ornaments of our Congrega-

you to take charge of these missions and to direct them. You are older than the rest, more accustomed to the ways of the missions, to which you have devoted yourself for so long a time, and you are better known and more popular. I beg you, therefore, in the name of the Blessed Virgin, do not refuse me this favor, as I think it necessary before God.

During these missions do not allow the Fathers to go out

tion, was born at Volturara in the diocese of Montemarano, November 3, 1726. Having early applied himself to study, he utilized the rare faculties which he had received from nature and was remarkably successful. He entered our Institute at the age of eighteen, as a cleric, and made his profession on the 17th of January, 1749. His progress in piety, his ardor for study were extraordinary. St. Alphonsus, who expected great things from him, sent him to the capital of the kingdom to follow the course of Hebrew, which was taught by the learned Ignazio La Calce. The young man astonished his professor by his proficiency in that language. He afterwards for several years taught theology to our young men, then he devoted himself to the apostolic ministry. The missions, the retreats, which he gave to different classes of society, were innumerable; his sanctity and his learning worked real prodigies. "There was, so to speak, not a bishop," says Father Tannoia, "not a city, not a village that did not wish to have his services, and the requests for him were so numerous, that the Superiors knew not whom they should first satisfy." Thus does the historian of St. Alphonsus express himself in his *Life of Father de Meo*. What is really extraordinary, is, that in the midst of occupations, so numerous and so various, the indefatigable apostle yet found the time and the means to continue his favorite studies, especially his historical studies. It is thus that, besides the "Refutation of the Letter and Reply of Don Cipriano Aristasio to Mgr. de Liguori . . . about Frequent Communion," he has left "A Chronological Apparatus" and twelve volumes of "Critico-Diplomatic Annals of the Kingdom of Naples in the Middle Ages." The learned well know the merits of these works; we need not eulogize them. The death of Father de Meo, prophesied by St. Alphonsus *as a great misfortune that would befall the Congregation*, occurred on March 20, 1786. The illustrious missionary was giving a retreat at Nola, and was speaking with earnestness on the pains of hell, when he was struck with apoplexy. His death was that of a saint, and heaven was pleased to glorify him by several miracles.

walking during the day, as I hear this is sometimes done. The people are certainly scandalized when they see them taking a walk. It would be better not to give missions than to give them in this manner.

I expect to hear good news from you, and I bless all that are with you.

After the Roman edition.

LETTER 1040.

To his Niece Maria Teresa de Liguori, Novice in the Monastery of S. Marcellino, at Naples.

Counsels relative to the choice of a confessor.

Live Jesus!

NOCERA, November 8, 1782.

I am very glad that you have made the spiritual exercises.

As for the confessor, whom you wish to take, I do not know him; but if he is virtuous, wise, prudent; if you find under his direction quiet of conscience, and that, while confiding in him, you have every liberty to make known your interior,—you may make choice of him, after having offered many prayers to Jesus Christ and the Blessed Virgin. You should also consider that this is a matter as serious as is the affair of your salvation, since eternal salvation depends for the most part on the direction of a good confessor.

I recommend you and all the other Sisters to the Lord; do the same for me. Continue to repeat this prayer: *O my Jesus! grant me Thy love, and I desire nothing more.*

I give you my blessing.

After the Roman edition.

LETTER 1041.

To Cardinal N.

He requests him to intercede for him with the Pope, and humbly justifies himself in regard to the accusations lodged against him.

NOCERA DE' PAGANI, November 15, 1782.

Your Eminence: These past two years I have been plunged in the deepest affliction for having caused sorrow to the Holy Father without intending to do so.

The fact is, in order to sustain the four houses of missionaries, which we possess in the kingdom, I was obliged to have recourse to the king to ask of him the approbation of the Rule, for which I never had obtained the royal *Exequatur*.

This application seemed to me to be necessary, and all the prudent men who were interested in our cause had advised me to make it.

I did not believe that I should in this have offended the Holy See, the prerogatives of which I have always defended. On the contrary, I intended to comply with the intentions of the Holy See, such as Benedict XIV., of holy memory, had declared to me in a letter of the year 1755.

I, therefore, acknowledge my fault, and I should like, before I die, to obtain through your Eminence the Holy Father's pardon, in order to leave this world in peace. This pardon I desire not only for myself, but also for my brethren who, besides, have had no part in this fault.

I have learned with very great joy that your Eminence expressed yourself very favorably in my regard.

At Rome I have no other efficacious help than your Eminence, for all the Cardinals with whom I was accustomed to correspond have passed away.

Your Eminence is going to the capital: this is the Providence of God, this Providence in which I have always trusted, which has arranged this journey from which I expect the greatest consolation and the best results.

I have written to a priest at Rome, a friend of mine, and I have requested him to give you all needed information about this affair. He is a learned and sincere priest, who of himself has charitably and gratuitously offered to aid us; he is well instructed in regard to everything. May your Eminence deign to listen to him, and to intercede for me with the Holy Father, to whom I have written, humbly soliciting his benevolence and his pardon.

May your Eminence read this letter, and if you think it proper, place it yourself in the hands of His Holiness, or have it sent in another way; otherwise withhold it.

Finally, I recommend myself to your kindness and your holy prayers, and remain, with the profoundest respect,

Your Eminence's

Very humble and grateful servant,

ALFONSO MARIA DE LIGUORI, *Bishop.*

[*P. S.*] On Tuesday I will send your Eminence the letter for the Holy Father.

After the original preserved in the archives of Father General at Rome.

LETTER 1042.

To his Niece, Sister Maria Teresa de Liguori, Novice in the Monastery of S. Marcellino, at Naples.

He answers her Christmas greetings and encourages her to be patient.

Live Jesus!

NOCERA, December 22, 1782.

I am indebted to your kindness, as well for the happy wishes that you have deigned to offer me on the occasion

of the approaching festival of Christmas, as for the sweetmeats that you have sent me.

You may be sure that, for my part, I have wished you everything good for your spiritual and temporal welfare.

In respect to your voice, do not be troubled.[1] You will gain more by doing the will of God than if you chanted from morning until night.

Pray to Jesus and Mary with equanimity, as I also pray for you, and go straight on.

Be prudent in the choice of your confessor; on it depends for the most part your eternal salvation.

May Jesus and Mary bless you! I remain. . .

After the Roman edition.

[1] This defect in the voice was caused by a hoarseness which seized Sister Teresa after her profession. The trouble increased to such an extent that she could scarcely speak in a whisper. "This evil," says Father Berruti in his book *Lo Spirito di S. Alfonso*," threatened even to become chronic, and it seemed that medicine could not cure her. The Sister, then, applied again to her holy uncle and represented to him that she could neither recite the divine Office nor chant the praises of the Lord. The saint sent her some small pictures of the Immaculate Conception and told her to swallow one of them every day in a little water, while fervently recommending herself to the Blessed Virgin. The Sister obeyed; but hardly had she begun this pious practice, when her voice suddenly returned, clearer and stronger than it had been before. She could thus freely chant the divine Office till her death. It was astonishing that up to extreme old age she preserved a full and sonorous voice, which her years and her assiduity in the choir did not in the least impair."

LETTER 1043.

To one of his Cousins, a Nun at Naples.

He encourages her in an interior trial through which he himself was passing at the time.

[NOCERA, 1782?]

Reverend Mother: You tell me that sometimes you believe that you are lost.

Let us mutually console and encourage each other, for I am passing through the same trial.

I am very near death, and yet temptations do not leave me; but I console myself, as you do, by looking at the crucifix.

Let us, therefore, cling to the cross, and try always to keep our eyes fixed on our dying Saviour. While acting thus, we must hope that he will not send us to hell where we should be separated from him and incapable of loving him; this would be the hell of our hell.

Let us, then, continue to say without ceasing: *O Lord, my God! make me love Thee, and afterwards do with me as Thou wilt. My sins merit every punishment; punish me, then, as Thou wishest; but do not take from me the power of loving Thee; deprive me of everything; do not permit me to be lost.*

Recommend me to our Lord, I entreat you, especially after holy Communion; I will render to you the same service.

When death approaches, I will let you know, so that you may aid me in a particular manner to pass into eternity.

Notwithstanding your desolation, do not fail, when finishing your prayers, always to recommend poor sinners to our Lord.

Tannoia, Book iv., Chapter xxxi.

LETTER 1044.

To Father Bartolomeo Mattia Corrado,[1] at Naples.

Counsel in regard to Baron Sarnelli's lawsuit.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

NOCERA, January 1, 1783.

In order to communicate the necessary information to the ministers, do not be satisfied with the mediation of Don Gaetano Celano; but employ also Don Nicola Vivenzio, who was so well informed in regard to our process.

As for the accusations in question, I remember they inspired us with fear the first time the process was mentioned; but at present we enjoy the king's favor, and we shall hardly lose our case, for the favor of the sovereign has removed all the force of the complaints on which the baron relied so much.

I do not recollect the other details; your Reverence will recollect them.

I bless you and remain . . .

BROTHER ALFONSO,
Rector Major.

[*P. S.*] I formerly gave Signor Vivenzio a bill of thirty ducats; but the case was not then pleaded, either by Celano or by Vivenzio, in whose hands the bill still remains. You will, therefore, do well to employ Vivenzio also to examine into the case.

After the original preserved in the archives of Father General at Rome.

[1] See Letter 1013, page 423.

LETTER 1045.

To Sister Brianna Carafa, in the Monastery of S. Marcellino, at Naples.

He counsels her to practise holy indifference.

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

NOCERA, January 6, 1783.

I received your letter yesterday, and I answer it briefly.

I understand the embarrassment in which you are. Keep yourself in holy indifference, ready to carry the cross that the Lord will send you. St. Francis de Sales sanctified himself by practising this maxim: *Ask for nothing and refuse nothing.* You also should put this in practice. Often repeat: *O Lord! I ask for nothing and desire nothing but Thy holy will.*

I will pray for you; be of good courage.

I bless you and always remain

Your very devoted and grateful servant,

ALFONSO MARIA.

After an old copy.

LETTER 1046.

To the Representatives of the Parish of Perdifumo.

He refuses to dismiss a subject without reason and complains about the accusations brought against the Institute.

Live Jesus!

PAGANI, January 18, 1783.

I was pleased to receive the letter which you did me the honor to address to me; but I cannot comply with your wish therein expressed for the reason that it is not permitted me, without a very good reason, to dismiss any one from the Congregation. If I acted otherwise, I should render myself grievously culpable before God.

The reasons that you have alleged in your appeal to his Majesty, the king, are of no account in the eyes of Don Pasquale,[1] both in regard to the poverty of his family, as also in regard to the spiritual necessities of your district.

I have ordered to be sent to him the royal decree which I received, the appeal addressed to the king by his father, and that which your council has signed, thus giving him full liberty to return to his native city. He, however, absolutely refuses to depart, and denies all that has been represented to the king, our sovereign.

Now what can I do? Should I, perhaps, forcibly drive away this young man? That would be improper.

You, gentlemen, seem to think very highly of Don Pasquale. Very well; and if he wishes to return to you, I will give him a thousand blessings. Should he change his mind, he will not need my permission; he is absolutely free to do what he wishes.

Such is the sincere expression of my views. What has displeased me, and displeased me greatly, was, that in these appeals addressed to the sovereign, superfluous imputations have been cast upon our humble Congregation. These should have been omitted. I hope, however, patiently to suffer these adversities for the love of Jesus Christ.

In conclusion, I offer myself to render you every kind of service in my power, and I beg you to believe the sentiments of sincere esteem with which I have the honor to be, Gentlemen,

Your very devoted and grateful servant,

ALFONSO MARIA, *Bishop.*

After the original preserved in the oratory of the Archconfraternity della Mercede and S. Alfonso, at Naples.

[1] Probably this was Don Pasquale de Mauro, a native of Perdifumo, in the Province of Principato Citra. He had entered the novitiate, November 13, 1782.

LETTER 1047.

To Sister Brianna Carafa, in the Monastery of S. Marcellino, at Naples.

He exhorts her to perform the duties of an office that draws her from her solitude.

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

NOCERA, January 30, 1783.

I see how much you are agitated on account of the new charge that has been imposed upon you.

Bend your head willingly under the yoke, and do not cease to keep your eyes fixed on God.

On the one hand, I feel compassion for you when I consider that you have been torn from the sweet embrace of the beautiful Rachel, in order to be united with the bleareyed Lia. I wish to say that you have been drawn from your delicious retreat, in which you have so long enjoyed repose, in order to be thrown into the midst of business. But, on the other hand, I have reason to be consoled, because you become in this way more like Jesus Christ, who lived among crowds of people, as well as in solitude.

Therefore, in order to resemble him, after having lived happily in the desert, do not now be unwilling to treat with the crowd. Move on courageously, and recommend yourself in a special manner to Jesus Christ and to his most holy Mother; for now you need twofold assistance.

Pray for me. I remain. . .

After the Roman edition.

LETTER 1048.

To Don Liborio Carfora.

The direction of souls is not to be sought of our own accord.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

PAGANI, February 19, 1783.

Reverend and Dear Sir: I answer in a few words your very kind letter.

In my opinion, as long as there is question of the care of souls, it is always bad to solicit, either directly or indirectly, any employment connected therewith.

You should be indifferent; and when you see that such a charge comes from God himself, without any steps taken on your part, voluntarily submit to the disposition of Providence.

Oh, how weighty are the words of Holy Scripture: *Pro animabus vestris rationem reddituri* [As being to render an account of your souls.—*Hebr.* xiii. 17].

You will thus enter, not by the window, but by the door, and then you can depend on the assistance of our Lord, and, consequently, find peace of conscience.

Placing myself at your service, I recommend myself to your prayers and remain, Reverend and Dear Sir,

Your very devoted servant,

ALFONSO MARIA, *Bishop.*

After an old copy.

LETTER 1049.

To his Niece, Sister Maria Teresa, Novice in the Monastery of S. Marcellino, at Naples.

About the choice of a confessor.

Live Jesus!

NOCERA, March 3, 1783.

I am pretty well; yet I am, after all, only a poor old man, and it is wonderful that at this age I can move at all.

Since you find rest and peace of mind with the confessor of the Community, continue to go to him. After three years we shall see what is the will of God. It is so long since you have written to me on this subject, and you have not yet made up your mind! I am pleased to see that such a choice is not made blindly; but on the other hand, are you waiting for God to say to you: Take this one, and not that one?—What is too much is hurtful.

I will say the prayers about which you speak. For your part recommend me also to Jesus Christ. May Jesus and Mary bless you always! I remain etc.

After the Roman edition.

LETTER 1050.

To the Secretary of the Society "dei Bianchi", at Naples.

He notifies him that the obligatory Masses for a deceased confrère have been said.

Live Jesus!

PAGANI, May 8, 1783.

I have spoken to the Father who keeps the register of Masses, and I requested him to apply two Masses to our

deceased confrère.[1] If I mistake not they have already been celebrated.

I, indeed, believe that within a short time you will also have to take the trouble of sending a mortuary letter about your humble servant.

Help me by your prayers. With sentiments of sincere esteem I remain

Your very devoted and grateful servant and confrère,

ALFONSO MARIA DE LIGUORI, *Bishop.*

After the original preserved in the Society *dei Bianchi* at Naples.

LETTER 1051.

To his Niece, Sister Maria Teresa de Liguori, Novice in the Monastery of S. Marcellino, at Naples.

In the religious profession she should make an entire sacrifice of herself, after the example of Jesus Christ.

Live Jesus!

NOCERA, June 23, 1783.

I hear with pleasure that the time of your profession is approaching.

Think of making this sacrifice in a proper manner, that is to say, by making it resemble that which Jesus Christ made of himself to his heavenly Father. Let it be sincere, universal, and permanent.

I will pray most fervently to the Lord, and I will have others to pray, that you may obtain this grace on which, one may say, your eternal happiness depends.

[1] The Society *dei Bianchi* had charge of securing religious help for those condemned to death. Each of its members had to celebrate two Masses for every deceased confrère. St. Alphonsus entered this pious association, April 15, 1725, having received only Minor Orders.

While informing you that I continue to live under the weight of a thousand pains, I bless you, and remain etc.

After the Roman edition.

LETTER 1052.

To Father Diodato Criscuoli, Rector of the House at Ciorani.

Important elections to be held in the Institute.—Dispositions as to this matter.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

NOCERA DE' PAGANI, June 28, 1783.

My advanced age and my infirmities render me incapable of governing the Congregation. I have thought of having an election of a coadjutor, who is to succeed me after my death in the office of Rector Major and who during my life should be invested with my whole authority. I have also resolved to proceed at the same time to the election of Assistants, of a Procurator of the Congregation, and of other officials, that is, Rectors of the houses.

For this end I communicated my resolution to his Majesty; and the king having deigned to approve it by a special decree, I wish that the whole Congregation should proceed to the election of Assistants, of a Procurator-General, and of other officials, and that for this purpose each house should depute three of its priests. This election having taken place, a Coadjutor should be chosen in the manner prescribed by the *Regolamento* in the paragraph which treats of the election of a new Rector Major, after the death of his predecessor.[1]

1 By this measure, planned by the wisest Fathers, St. Alphonsus intended to prevent a misfortune that might befall his Institute after his death; a misfortune that would completely ruin the houses of the kingdom of Naples, the existence of which had already been greatly endangered in consequence of the division that had occurred. On the other hand, the Fathers in the Pontifical States, fortified by the

I make known to you, dear Father, this royal decision, so that each house may at once designate the three Fathers, who are to assist at the election of the Assistants, of the Procurator, and of the Rectors. Each house should also designate among those priests the one who, after the election of which I have just spoken, should concur in the election of my Coadjutor with all those who, by virtue of the *Regolamento*, must vote at this occasion.

Please see to it that everything is done punctually, regularly, and that your deputies assemble here without fail on the 22d of next July; for the above-mentioned elections will take place on the 23d.

I wish you to acknowledge the receipt of this letter.

I conclude by blessing you and all your subjects.

ALFONSO MARIA,
Rector Major.

After the original preserved in the archives of Father General at Rome.

LETTER 1053.

To his Niece, Sister Maria Teresa, in the Convent of S. Marcellino, at Naples.

He congratulates her on her profession.

Live Jesus!

PAGANI, July 11, 1783.

The news of your profession has, indeed, filled me with joy, for now you may in very truth say to Jesus Christ: *Lord, now I am all Thine.*

There remains but one thing for you to do, to watch with the greatest care over the affections of your heart and

Holy See with all the necessary powers, assembled on the 15th of October of this year, and appointed as Rector Major Father Francesco Antonio de Paola, in conformity with the Rule which they professed.

to keep most faithfully the vows you have taken. The way leading from the cell to heaven is, without doubt, a very safe way; but it is, nevertheless, possible to pass from the cell into the abyss of hell. It will not avail us much to have lived in Jerusalem, unless in Jerusalem we have led holy lives.

The only thing that I can do, is to recommend you to Jesus Christ, and I promise you that I will do this with all my heart.

I bless you in the name of Jesus and Mary, and I remain etc.

After the Roman edition.

LETTER 1054.

To Father Diodato Criscuoli, Rector of the House at Ciorani.

He announces that the time fixed for the holding of the Chapter has been postponed.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

[NOCERA, July 1783.]

I believed, dear Father, that all the deputies of the houses would be able to assemble here on the 22d instant, and afterwards proceed to the elections, conformably to the royal instruction. But I have ascertained, that the deputies of our house at Iliceto cannot arrive here before the 23d of the month. On the other hand, those at Caposele cannot come before Sunday the 27th, and may even arrive later.

Besides, Father Blasucci says that before the 25th instant it would be impossible to receive any decisive answer from Girgenti concerning the proposed elections.

You see, then, that, if we hold these elections on the day originally fixed, the greater part of the deputies would be missing. I have, therefore, thought it my duty to postpone

them to another day of which notice shall be given later on.

Communicate to all the Fathers this new decision. The election of the deputies will, nevertheless, be valid.

I bless you and all your subjects.

ALFONSO MARIA,
Rector Major.

After an old copy.

LETTER 1055.

To the Same.

Date fixed for the opening of the Chapter.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

PAGANI, July 26, 1783.

Reverend and Dear Father: I am told that your house has not yet chosen the three deputies who are to assist at the next Chapter conformably to the circular which is well known to you.

I had resolved to postpone the Chapter to a more favorable time, in order not to create new troubles and new dissensions, instead of procuring good order and peace. But the deputies of the other houses heard my orders only; they have arrived and urge me to convoke the Assembly, the date of which had at first been fixed for the 23d instant. I, therefore, notify you, dear Father, and your Community at Ciorani that, if your deputies are not chosen by the 1st of next August, your house will forfeit its right, and the election of its deputies will be declared to have lapsed. The Chapter will then be opened by the deputies of the other houses on August 3, without any prorogation.

Please, dear Father, acknowledge the receipt of this letter.

I give you my blessing.

ALFONSO MARIA,
Rector Major.

After the original preserved in the archives of Father General at Rome.

LETTER 1056.

To the Fathers and Brothers of the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer, in the Kingdom of Naples.

Obligation of submitting to the decisions of the Chapter. — Particular points of the primitive Rule the observance of which must be put in force. [1]

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

PAGANI, August 30, 1783.

My dearest Fathers and Brothers in Jesus Christ: God has deigned, in his infinite mercy, to bless the General Chapter which has been held, with the consent of the king, in our house at Ciorani. It was brought to a successful conclusion; and, what consoles me most, everything ended in peace and perfect tranquillity, to the great satisfaction of the Fathers that were deputies. All our houses will, I hope, receive with joy the decisions that have been given. These decisions you will learn from the authentic copy of the acts of the Chapter sent to each house, and after they

[1] This circular of itself would suffice to prove the greatness of the saint's attachment to the Rule approved by the Holy See,—a Rule which, after all, was his work and from which he borrowed almost literally all the points contained in this letter. In regard to the *Regolamento* let us again say: The saint had to pass under the Caudine Forks, in order not to see the work of his whole life annihilated in the kingdom of Naples. The sacrifice was great, and every one will admit that St. Alphonsus came forth from the ordeal a true martyr.

have been read to the Community, preserve them in the archives.

The deputies had not only brought to the Chapter instructions relative to the election prescribed by our circular, they had also been commissioned by their respective houses to point out certain disorders and shortcomings in regard to regular observance; and hence they also wished suitable remedies to be applied to prevent the evil from growing inveterate and, consequently, from becoming incurable.

But the Chapter had no other duty than that of electing my Coadjutor, the Assistants, the Procurator-General and the Rectors of the houses. The deputies, then, by unanimous consent, as the acts show, arrived at the following decision: A list of the faults shoul be made; it should be sent to my Coadjutor and to me; and we both should then take, with the advice of our Assistants, the measures that we might judge to be necessary for the good of the Institute. These measures should then be imposed, not after the manner of a statute, but under the form of a precept, so as to re-establish and revive in all the houses the observance of the interior *Regolamento*, which his Majesty has deigned to approve.

We wish, then, with God's help to second the just intentions of the Chapter, and thus, we are convinced, we shall comply with the desire of our houses. Besides, my Coadjutor, the Assistants, and I myself have maturely examined and weighed everything. We, therefore, desire that the respective Superiors and all the subjects of our houses should exactly observe the following points which were proposed to us in the Chapter. This will be the means of reviving everywhere the spirit of regular observance and insure everywhere good order.

1. As regards the missions, we charge the Superiors who direct them, and the local Superiors, carefully to watch over the conduct of the missionaries and to examine whether

the old customs, established and practised from the beginning, are observed; whether, consequently, the missionaries preach and catechize with the learning, clearness, gravity, and decorum suitable to the sacred pulpit; whether they go at their pleasure to this or that church; whether they abandon, without the express permission of the Superior of the mission, the employment assigned to them; whether they are edifying and reserved in their relations with persons of the opposite sex, either in the confessional or elsewhere; whether they go to visit seculars without permission; whether by modesty, humility, patience, virtues which they are so strictly bound to observe by the character with which they are invested, they edify the people, or whether they scandalize them by their manner of acting; whether they keep themselves in retirement in the church or in the house of the missionaries, attending to the ministry confided to them, or whether they take the liberty of going out walking to amuse themselves; whether one sees among them, charity, submission, and holy harmony; above all, whether they accept in the spirit of obedience and without reply every employment assigned to them by the Superior of the mission.

We also wish and ordain that, during the time of the missions, religious moderation be carefully observed in regard to their diet. Expensive meats, such as chicken, birds, choice fish, delicate viands, fine confectioneries, and every kind of sweetmeats—all this is forbidden during the time of the mission; and if such things are offered as presents, we desire that they be generously refused, no matter by whom they may have been sent.

We ordain, moreover, that, conformably to the *Regolamento*, and according to an ancient custom, a meditation of half an hour be made in common every day on the missions; in winter in the morning, and in summer in the afternoon.

Let every one be careful also to make, at least, a quar-

ter of an hour's thanksgiving after celebrating Mass. Let every one celebrate this tremendous mystery with the recollection and the fidelity to the rubrics required by the Church in the celebration of the holy Mass.

Finally, we enjoin upon the respective Superiors of our missions the important duty of informing us every month, in detail, of the infractions of the aforesaid regulations, and, if they desire to have a prompt remedy applied, they should previously apply to us.

When the missionaries have returned to their respective houses, the local Rectors should gather exact information about the conduct of each one of them, and keep us informed of what may have happened during the mission.

2. We impose upon the local Rectors as a matter of conscience, not to allow the introduction of any novelty, of any abuse that may wound, even in the slightest thing, holy poverty and the Community-life, which we have sworn to observe; and if, perchance, some abuse of this kind has been introduced, they should carefully extirpate it.

We, therefore, forbid all our subjects to keep for their own use, in their rooms or elsewhere, any kind of sweetmeats, chocolate, linen that has not been furnished by the Community, tobacco other than which is contained in their ordinary snuff-box.

Supplies of tobacco, destined for the private use of a subject and left in charge of the économe, or of any one else, are also forbidden. Finally, we prohibit small supplies of articles of devotion, of fruit and the like. On the contrary, we wish the subjects to receive from the hand of those that govern them all those things that are required according to their needs.

It is also our wish, that all the subjects, when they are at home, should always keep their valises open; and the

Rectors shall take care to visit every month the rooms of their subordinates, to see whether there is anything in them that is against holy poverty.

We forbid every subject to celebrate holy Mass, or to have Mass said by another to his own intention, except the Mass during the octave of All Souls' day, conformably to the usage that has always been in vigor among us; and for which, moreover, no stipend whatsoever is to be accepted.

Finally, we forbid all to keep in their possession the least sum of money, whether it be restitution, or whether furnished them for whatever reason by their own families. On the contrary, we desire that every sum of this kind be deposited in the hands of the Rector, or of him who governs in his absence; and as soon as the Rector returns, it must at once be put into his hands.

By virtue of holy poverty and of the perfect Community-life which we profess, we prohibit all the subjects to apply to their own use or that of other persons, under whatever pretext, any part of the emoluments, offerings or gifts, which they may receive for the work done by them, or for any employment exercised by them, under whatever title they may have been presented, even that of special benevolence. We wish that all donations should be incorporated into the Community and placed in the hands of the Superior of the house where one lives, and from which one receives the needed food, with all that is required for a decent maintenance.

Every infraction of this particular point must be rigorously punished by the respective Superiors; and if it should be grave, they must inform us of it, so that we may take suitable measures and chastise, as it deserves, any such scandal, should it ever appear among us.

To remove from us the least obstacle to a perfect Community-life, the Chapter desires that the respective Superiors should take the accustomed oath of never permitting their

subjects anything, that may wound poverty and the perfect Community-life which we profess.

We here give the accustomed formula of this oath; and we desire that our Coadjutor, the local Rectors, and the Visitors should take it in the presence of the Community before they enter upon the duties of their office.

It reads as follows:

"I, N. N., promise under oath to the divine Majesty, and bind myself under pain of mortal sin not to permit, for any reason whatsoever, the subjects who are living in the house, to have for their own arbitrary use any sum of money; moreover, not to permit any one to have in his room, for his own arbitrary use, eatables, such as fruit, sweetmeats, syrups, chocolate, liquors, supplies of tobacco and the like; in case of necessity, I will furnish them to the subjects myself, or have them furnished by those who have these things in charge. Furthermore, I promise not to keep for my own use the aforesaid articles, but truly to incorporate into the Community every article that may be received, whether directed to me, or to other members of the Community. Moreover, if the subjects are to leave home, I bind myself not to give permission to use the money with which I must furnish them, except for the buying of food, for travelling expenses, and for any other expenses which they may have to incur, and for nothing else. May God so help me and these his holy Gospels!"

3. Although in regard to clothing, the subjects are ordinarily furnished with a new soutane every two years and a simar every three years; nevertheless, we beg all the subjects to become deeply imbued with the spirit of poverty, of which they have made profession. Hence, if after the lapse of this time, a subject finds himself well provided with clothing, he should put off asking for new garments; for every one should glory in sharing the poverty of Jesus Christ, and consider that, if the Community is obliged to

furnish what is necessary, it is not obliged to furnish what is superfluous and useless.

The Rectors shall be particularly watchful of this point, so that holy poverty may not be trodden under foot; and we forbid them to permit the subjects to have any other soutane or simar than the old and the new. It will not be allowed them to have more than one cloak, and if any one having a winter cloak, desires the use of a summer cloak, he should borrow it from the common wardrobe, whenever he needs it.

4. We forbid the subjects to go to the houses of their families, except in case of urgent necessity specified in our Rule. If the father or mother, brother or sister of a member of the Congregation, are attacked with a grave malady, we allow them to visit them with the permission of the Rector of the house or of him who takes his place; but in other cases we forbid them to visit their relatives without our express authority, and we wish that such permissions should not be granted by anyone, whether by the local Rectors, or by the temporary Superiors who replace them either at home or abroad.

5. When the respective Superiors must send a subject to give retreats, octaves, novenas, etc., they should always keep before their minds the requirements of propriety, and give a companion to him whom they appoint, taking into consideration the particular circumstances that present themselves in each case.

6. Our Rule enjoins upon the Superiors the strict duty of watching over the writing of letters. Hence we forbid the subjects to write letters to any one whoever he may be (except to the Fathers Assistants) without the knowledge of the Rector, or of him who takes his place at home or abroad, and we desire that, conformably to our old custom, the letters should be shown to the Superiors.

We likewise forbid the receiving of letters which come

from any one, except from the Assistants, and which have not first been shown to the Superior.

The Assistants themselves shall not be exempt from this Rule, except in regard to letters addressed to our subjects.

As for the letters that treat about matters of conscience, if their contents are really of this nature, they must not be opened or read by the Superior, although they must pass through his hands.

7. The Rectors shall take care to call for each subject once a month; they shall benevolently inquire about his wants, both spiritual and temporal, shall encourage him kindly and provide him with what he may need.

8. In order to enforce in all our houses regular observance, as mentioned in our Rule, we wish that in each house a priest be appointed by the Rector to watch over the common exterior and public observances; and every Monday after dinner, in the refectory, the faults that have been committed, shall be made known, according to the laudable practice dating back to the beginning of the Institute.

9. We charge the Superiors to keep exactly and in detail an account of the money received and expended; and they shall take care to call the two Consultors every month to revise these accounts in concert with them.

10. All the decisions reached on important matters by the local Rectors in accord with their Consultors and the Admonitor, should be registered in a book, kept for this purpose, and those that have concurred, should affix their signatures. If there is question of an expense that exceeds one hundred ducats, the opinion of the most discreet Fathers of the house should also be asked.

Such are, my dearest Fathers and Brothers, the dispositions that we have thought it our duty to make in the interest of your souls, in order to second the laudable inten-

tions of the Chapter and those that you have yourselves manifested.

To fulfil the duty of our charge and also a duty of conscience, we shall add a general recommendation. First, it is our wish that our interior Rule be exacty observed. Secondly, we wish that there should be observed in all our houses, in a uniform manner, all the old customs hitherto so laudably practised, either at home or on our missions; and we command the Superiors not to tolerate the least relaxation, the least abuse on this point.

Finally, we withdraw and annul every dispensation or permission granted by us, or our Vicar, either to all in general, or to any one in particular, and if there be any reason to the contrary, let it be made known to our Coadjutor. The latter will examine the question, will weigh before God the reasons alleged, and will grant, if he think fit, according to the necessities of the moment, the permissions that may appear to him to be required.

The present circular shall be read in the refectory at the beginning of every month; in this way the remembrance of it will be renewed, and the transgressors can allege no excuse.

We entreat all to recommend us to our Lord and to the Blessed Virgin, and to pray for the prosperity of our Institute. We impart to all our paternal benediction.

BROTHER ALFONSO MARIA,

Rector Major.

After the original preserved in the archives of Father General at Rome.

LETTER 1057.

To his Niece, Sister Maria Teresa de Liguori, in the Convent of S. Marcellino at Naples.

He speaks about his approaching death; counsels regarding a change of confessor.

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

NOCERA, November 20, 1783.

I have received your letter; and I will answer it to let you know that I am on the brink of eternity. But, thank God, I am ready to leave this world at the first call from on high.

It seems to me like a thousand years before I can leave this world; so much do I desire to die in the grace of God.

I have heard of the death of one of your pupils. I am praying for her. I also most cordially recommend to God you and your whole Community.

You wish to change your confessor. Do not be hasty; for this kind of change is of little use. Wait: recommend the affair a little longer to Jesus Christ and to the Blessed Virgin; for Satan always hopes to profit by this change of confessors.

Wait at least a little while, and recommend yourself to Jesus Christ after having received holy Communion.

I am glad that you have made the spiritual exercises.

Do not fail to recommend me every day to Jesus Christ. I give you my blessing.

Be faithful in making acts of love to God frequently during the day, whenever you think of doing so. Pray to Jesus Christ for me, as I pray to him for you.

Give my regards to Donna Marianna, and tell her to recommend me to Jesus Christ; and do you fervently pray to our Lord, Jesus Christ, and solicit from him the grace

that I most desire, the grace of a happy death, for my end is approaching.

I bless you again.

Your very humble servant and uncle,

ALFONSO MARIA DE LIGUORI, *Bishop.*

After an old copy.

LETTER 1058.

To Sister Brianna Carafa, in the Monastery of S. Marcellino, at Naples.

He consoles her in her trials.

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

NOCERA, December 5, 1783.

I have received your letter, and I learn with what anguish you are tortured, fearing that you are abandoned by God.

This good Master never abandons any one; hence the more you feel yourself afflicted, the more you should put yourself into his hands. He himself assures us that he is all goodness to the soul that hopes in him and seeks him. *Bonus est Dominus sperantibus in eum, animæ quærenti illum.*, [The Lord is good to them that hope in him, to the soul that seeketh him.—*Lam.* iii. 25.] The more you find yourself discouraged, the more you should put yourself into his hands; you will thereby oblige the Lord to help you in a special manner. Therefore often repeat: *O my Jesus! I always wish to confide in Thee till my last breath. O my Jesus, my Saviour! I wish always to love Thee, and I always wish to hope that Thou wilt save me, in order that I may be able to go to love Thee in heaven for all eternity.*

Offer this prayer for yourself, and for me, for I recommend you most cordially to Jesus Christ and I bless you.

Dilate your heart; we have to treat with a God who is all full of love; it is folly deliberately to mistrust him.

Recommend yourself to the Blessed Virgin, and rest assured that she will save you. Say to her: *O Mary, my tender Mother! I wish always to love thee, and always to trust in thee; it is thy duty to obtain for me eternal salvation.*

I hear that your confessor is sick; do not neglect to apply to another in whom you have confidence. But, above all, recommend yourself to the Blessed Virgin; pray to her to give you a great love for Jesus Christ, and I shall do the same for you.

Have great confidence in Jesus Christ, and never let a day pass without making three acts of love to him. Go every day to salute him in a special manner in the Blessed Sacrament, so that he may give you his love. I bless you again, and remain, etc.

After the Roman edition.

LETTER 1059.

To his Niece, Sister Maria Teresa de Liguori, in the Monastery of S. Marcellino, at Naples.

Christmas wishes.

Live Jesus and Mary!

NOCERA, December 25, 1783.

I thank you much for having wished me all spiritual happiness during the solemnities of the Birth of Jesus Christ.

I have had the same wishes for you, namely, that the divine Infant with his little and all-powerful hand may take from your heart all earthly affection, so that you may entirely belong to him. This is the only happiness that is worthy of being desired and purchased at any price.

I also thank you for the sweetmeats that you have sent me, and I pray to the Infant Jesus, by virtue of his love, to make sweet all the crosses that he sends you.

Pray for me, who am expecting death at every moment. I remain, etc.

After the Roman edition.

LETTER 1060.

To the Same.

He gives her some news and recommends himself to her prayers.

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

[NOCERA, the year 1784?]

I am still sick; but, thanks be to God, I have no fever.

I am anxious to know how you are, and I beg you to recommend me to the Blessed Virgin.

At present I feel better; but during the past few days I was seized with pains, from which I am now delivered.

Do not forget to say three *Hail Marys* to the Blessed Virgin, that she may obtain for me peace of conscience in the midst of so many scruples with which the devil constantly torments me.

I bless you, and I pray to Mary to give you holy peace. Recite the *Salve Regina* every day, that she may help you to enjoy peace; and if you happen to be troubled, say a *Hail Mary* to be delivered from your agitation, for it prevents your union with God.

After the Roman edition.

Letter 1061.

To the Same.

He recommends to her holy abandonment.

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

Nocera, August 17, 1784.

I have received your letter, and I have heard with pleasure that you have nearly recovered from your severe cough. I pray to Jesus and Mary to grant you complete restoration to health, so that you may be able the better to satisfy the obligations of your state.

However, always put yourself into the hands of our Lord, neither wishing nor asking either for health or for sickness, but only for the perfect accomplishment in you of the divine will.

Ask the Blessed Virgin for this grace, and ask for it often; she will, without doubt, obtain it for you.

As long as your health is not entirely re-established, submit to the advice of Mother Abbess in regard to what concerns the choir, the refectory, and all the rest; be assured that by doing what the Mother Abbess tells you, you will please God.

Do not allow yourself to be disquieted; always endeavor to preserve peace of mind.

Do not forget to pray continually that I may die a good death; for my end must be near, as I am eighty-eight years of age, and am suffering from many infirmities. For my part, I do not cease to pray for you.

I bless you, and remain etc.

After the Roman edition.

LETTER 1062.

To the Same.

He exhorts her to practise patience.

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

PAGANI, August 30, 1784.

Your esteemed letter contains complaints about the lay-sister.

I will pray to Jesus Christ to give you patience, and at the same time to enlighten this lay-sister, that she may enter into herself and be sanctified.

What is to be done? We must suffer a little for the love of Jesus Christ. St. Philip Neri used to say that Paradise is not made for cowards.

For this purpose say a prayer to the Patriarch St. Joseph and recite the *Hail Mary* three times in honor of the Blessed Virgin. Then preserve inward joy by fleeing from melancholy as you would flee from a pestilence.

I have nothing else to say. Recommend me to Jesus Christ, as I always do for you. I bless you, and remain etc.

After the Roman edition.

LETTER 1063.

To the new Superior of the Redemptoristines, at Sant' Agata.

Advantages of peace in the Community.—Means of preserving it.

Live Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

PAGANI, September 20, 1784.

I have read your letter, and have been consoled on hearing that you have been elected Superior of your Communi-

ty, the more so since your election has quieted the troubles that had begun to arise.

I praise the Lord for this. I will pray to the Lord, and will always beg him to maintain this religious family, of which he is the Father, in the peace that it has again found; for without peace what good can we do?

As peace reigns in a family, when the respective duties are faithfully fulfilled by each of its members, I entreat you zealously to watch that all the religious may faithfully observe the Rules and Constitutions, that they promised to observe at their profession. It is thus that in all will be maintained the peace that they now enjoy.

Especially do I beg you and your whole Community to recommend me to the Lord for a good death; for I am near my term of life, being eighty-eight years old, and a victim of many infirmities.

Moreover, if the Constitutions and customs of your Institute are not opposed to it, I beg you to give the religious habit to the daughter of my servant Alessio, for I have not the heart to see him troubled on that account. I should wish before death to see him entirely satisfied, and I hope to obtain this consolation from your Community.

I bless you, and all the Sisters, and remain,

Dear Mother,

Your very devoted servant,

ALFONSO MARIA DE LIGUORI, *Bishop.*

After an old copy.

LETTER 1064.

To his Niece, Sister Maria Teresa de Liguori, in the Monastery of S. Marcellino, at Naples.

He thanks her for her good wishes for Christmas.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

NOCERA DE' PAGANI, December 17, 1784.

My dear Niece, I am extremely obliged to you for your good wishes for Christmas; may the Lord deign to grant you his graces in abundance, and inflame you with his holy love!

Thanks also for the exquisite sweetmeats which you have sent me.

I shall very willingly pray for your spiritual Father; but he should, on his part, recommend me to our dear Lord. Please do the same for me, for I stand in need of prayers.

I have nothing more to communicate. I bless you and remain always,

Your very humble servant and uncle,

ALFONSO DE LIGUORI.

After the original preserved in the archives of our house at Pagani.

LETTER 1065.

To the King of Naples, Ferdinand IV.

Information gathered concerning four young men who were preparing for holy Orders.

[NOCERA, October 19, 1785.]

Sire: I had humbly asked your Majesty for permission to have holy Orders conferred on four young men of my Con-

gregation, although in their native place the number of priests exceeds the proportion established by law. These young men are the brothers Giuseppe Nicola, and Nicola Domenico Scelsi, of Casamassima in the diocese of Bari; Francesco Paolo Campanella and Giovanni Stefano Polignani of Putignano in the diocese of Conversano.

Your Majesty deigned to answer my petition by a royal rescript of January 8, of this year. According to the terms of this rescript, I was to gather information concerning the number of inhabitants and the number of priests of the aforesaid places; to indicate the age of these young men; and to examine whether they possessed the requisite qualities; then to address a report of all this to your Majesty.

Conformably to your orders, I have gathered the necessary information in regard to the points mentioned. The Vicar-Capitular of Bari tells me that the territory of Casamassima counts three thousand ninety-two inhabitants and thirty-six priests, of whom six, on account of their great age and infirmities, are absolutely incapable of attending to the ministry. The twin-brothers Giuseppe Nicola and Nicola Domenico Scelsi, are eighteen years of age.

The Bishop of Conversano has furnished me with the following report. The territory of Putignano has eight thousand one hundred and twenty-one inhabitants, eighty-six priests and two subdeacons. Among these priests there are seven unable to labor in the ministry. Francesco Campanella is nineteen years old, and Giovanni Stefano Polignani is twenty.

Finally, I have been assured that these four young men possess all the qualities necessary for the reception of sacred Orders and of the priesthood.

This is the information which I was to furnish your Majesty in accordance with your request. I, therefore,

humbly renew my petition, and beg your Majesty to permit these young men to receive holy Orders.[1]

I remain with profound respect, Sire,

Your Majesty's most humble servant and subject,

ALFONSO MARIA DE LIGUORI, *Bishop.*

After the original preserved in the archives of our house at Pagani.

[1] The petition, it seems, was favorably received; for the catalogue of the Congregation speaks of three of the young men just mentioned.

Supplementary Letters.

LETTER I.

To Mgr. Teodoro Basta, Bishop of Melfi.

He gives him his opinion about the ordination of a deacon.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

NOCERA, March 13, 1753.

Right Reverend Sir: I received a visit from Angelo Antonio Grazioli.[1] He informed me that he had been told by Father Fiocchi that your Lordship would consent to ordain him priest, if you received from me the assurance that you could do so without scruple.

Here is my opinion. If your Lordship wished to dispense Don Angelo Antonio from the interstices, you could not do so, for the church at Atella does not happen to be in such a case of necessity, as is required by the Council of Trent. But if the dispensation of the interstices should be granted by Rome, you could without scruple apply it in this case.

Moreover, according to Father Fiocchi's suggestion, I examined the applicant for ordination, and he can be admitted to the priesthood. As for the certificate *De vita*

[1] Angelo Antonio Grazioli, born at Atella, in the diocese of Melfi, June 13, 1727, belonged to the family of Benedetto Grazioli, a very distinguished benefactor of the Congregation, and who is often mentioned in the correspondence of St. Alphonsus. Before becoming a priest, Angelo Grazioli spent some months in a house of our Institute, but without taking the habit. Later in 1759, he entered the novitiate, and on the 21st of November, the following year, he made his profession.

et moribus [of good conduct and morals], I send it herewith enclosed.

In regard to your journey to Naples, I would ask your Lordship not to undertake it, before you have informed me, for we must wait for the issue of certain affairs that are known to me and that concern our Congregation. Such a step taken at this time would prove useless; it might even be hurtful to us.[1]

Please give me, Right Reverend Sir, your blessing, and believe me

Your Lordship's

Very humble, devoted and grateful servant,

ALFONSO DE LIGUORI,

of the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer.

I, the undersigned, Rector Major of the venerable Congregation of priests of the Most Holy Redeemer, certify and attest that the deacon, Don Angelo Antonio Grazioli, of the territory of Atella, in the diocese of Melfi, has lived among us for several months, and that during this time his morals have always been irreproachable and his conduct exemplary.

In testimony whereof I have drawn up the present certificate, which I have signed with my hand and furnished with the seal of my Congregation.

From our house of S. Michele Archangelo, in the city and diocese of Nocera de' Pagani. March 13, 1753.

ALFONSO DE LIGUORI, *R. M.*

L. ✠ *S.* PASQUALE AMENDOLARA, C. SS. R.

Secretary.

After the original in possession of Mgr. Giuseppe Camassa, Bishop of Melfi.

[1] There was question of a foundation at Rionero in the diocese of Melfi. This foundation was not made on account of the opposition of the Neapolitan government.

LETTER 2.

To Father Gasparo Caione, Rector of the House at Caposele.

Removal of a Brother.—A word about the theology of Father Berti.—Details relative to a postulant.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

NOCERA, January 5, 1757.

My dear Don Gasparo: I have read your letter, and I see the embarrassment which the affair of Brother Gennaro [Rendina] causes you; but I did not wish to refuse this Brother to Don Benedetto [Grazioli]. For this I had very grave reasons. He will, therefore, set out for Naples; I have promised him and I cannot take back my word.

As for taking from a house a Brother or another necessary subject to accomodate any one, that, my dear Gasparo, I cannot do, for I would be accused of injustice or partiality. We must then think of remedying the evil as well as we can. If you have not at Caposele any subject who suits you, Brother Domenico [Picardi] might answer. He is young, discreet, and knows how to write. I know not whether he can cipher, but he can be made to learn. Tell me, therefore, at once, whether you wish me to send him. I say, *at once;* for Don Benedetto wishes to have Brother Gennaro immediately, and the latter must be sent to him without delay; this is important.

If you wish to have Brother Domenico, send the mule at once, so that the Brother may depart without delay.

As for the mission at Castelluccia, it is not so necessary to give it at the beginning of Lent. It will be sufficient for you to promise, that you will send two or three Fathers any time during Lent. But the mission at Rocca should necessarily begin on the first Sunday of Lent. A second mission has been promised for Lent, that of Capaccio. Have an understanding with the Rector of Ciorani about

the time, so that the six missionaries who are necessary, may be furnished partly by Caposele, partly by Ciorani.

Brother Leonardo [Cicchetti) takes care of all the temporal affairs of the house; he keeps an account of all the Masses, looks after the provisions, etc. It is not possible, I am told, to take him from here.

Father Leo has sent me eighteen *carlini;* but I do not know for what purpose.

After having written the above, I read the apology of Father Berti.[1] He makes a wonderful defence; but, notwithstanding all he says, his theology would be dangerous reading for young people. I will, however, examine it now thoroughly.

I willingly give you a very special blessing; and I beg you to take courage.

As for the missions, I permit you to give one or the other; but a Rector should not be engaged in all the missions. Hence I say *one or the other.*

The young man from Caposele [2] has come to see me, but the archbishop, as Father Leo writes, has refused to allow him to take the habit. I was, therefore, obliged to send him back to Caposele, that he might call upon the archbishop; otherwise he could not be ordained, and we should, moreover, lose the favor of Mgr. de Conza, since I promised him not to receive any of his diocesans without his permission. The young man has also obtained the votes of the Consultors, but he must yet have the permission of his archbishop.

1 This is probably the work of Father Berti, entitled: "Augustinianum systema de gratia ab iniqua Baianni et Janseniani erroris insimulatione vindicatur" (Defence of the Augustinian System of Grace, unjustly accused of Baianism and Jansenism).

2 Probably young Don Andrea Morza. See volume i. Letter 301, page 504, note.

As I do not wish to write more, I beg you to notify Father Fiocchi that Brother Gennaro must be sent at once to Atella, and then to Naples. Give Father Fiocchi my thanks.

BROTHER ALFONSO.

After the original preserved at Bisceglia in the family of Mgr. Domenico La Notte.

LETTER 3.

To Don Francesco N., at Saragnano.

Arrangement relative to a mission to be given at Saragnano.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph, Teresa!

NOCERA, January 21, 1758.

My dear Don Francesco: I regret to be obliged to repeat what I have already said to Don Giuseppe. It is unbecoming for us to compete with the Jesuit Fathers; for I profess in their regard too great an esteem. On the other hand, I know that among you there is a division of opinion, some wishing to have the Jesuits, others the Fathers from Ciorani. But Father Barra has already spoken to the parish priest, or, at least, has already been introduced to him. This good Father would, therefore, receive a kind of affront, if he did not come to preach at Saragnano.

Here is what I have said to Don Giuseppe and also to the Jesuit Father: Two of us will hear confessions and will preach a little in the evening, if it is desired; but Father Barra is to preach the evening sermons. He is, moreover, a good preacher, as you yourself have said. I had promised our Fathers, it is true; but I repeat, it is not becoming for us to be wanting in respect to the Jesuit Fathers; I am on too good terms with them.

Please accept, my dear Sir, the expression of my very humble respect,

Your very affectionate and devoted servant,

ALFONSO DE LIGUORI,

of the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer.

After the original preserved at Saragnano by the Sarno brothers.

LETTER 4.

To Father Gasparo Caione, Rector of the House at Caposele.

Several recommendations.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

NOCERA, August 17, 1758.

I am happy to hear that observance flourishes in your house. However, I would draw your attention to the three following points.

The bread, I am told, is badly made; it is brown and of a bad quality. I beg you to have at least the flour purified.

In the second place, the Chapter, it seems to me, is too long, since it ordinarily lasts a whole hour. See that it does not continue beyond three quarters of an hour.

In the third place, the discipline also lasts too long. See to it that the words before the pauses be not drawn out too long; this will be a means of shortening it.

Nevertheless, I repeat, I am happy to know that observance is flourishing. I bless you all.—Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

BROTHER ALFONSO,

of the Most Holy Redeemer.

After the original preserved in the archives of Father General at Rome.

LETTER 5.

To Father Antonio Tannoia, Rector of the House at Caposele.

Conduct to be observed in regard to a young man whose vocation is assailed.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

NOCERA, July 17, 1760.

The mother of the young man from Tito [1] has addressed an appeal to the king, saying that her child was the only support of her family. The Council of the Regency immediately informed the Bishop of Nocera, begging him to make the case known to me, so that I might try to console the mother. I answered Mgr. Volpe in the following manner: "I have in no way influenced the young man, as his mother affirms; he has taken the resolution and now maintains it of his own free will; and as he is no more than sixteen or seventeen years old, he cannot be called the support of his family. Moreover, in order to continue his studies and become a priest, he would have to enter a seminary; now his family would have to maintain him there at great expense, since the bishop does not ordain any subject who lives outside of the seminary."

Mgr. Volpe writes to me that he has already sent in his report to that effect. If now the young man is firm, and if it appears to you that he will be a good subject, it will be proper to permit him to state his own case, and to address a memorial to the king. He should tell the king, that his family has no need of him; that this whole affair is the result of passion on the part of his mother, who wishes to make him lose his vocation; that it is not true, that he has been influenced by the Fathers; and that he left his family of his own accord. If his Majesty should doubt his sinceri-

[1] Frater C. Santorelli. See vol. i., Letter 316, page 530.

ty, he could be examined by some religious and sent to some monastery, provided it be not to Tito where he would be strongly assailed by his relatives.

This memorial should be signed by the young man, and countersigned by a notary, and he should send it immediately. However, I leave the matter to your prudence; for I do not know certain circumstances which you know, such as the qualities and intentions of the young man.

Those two young men of Vito and of Acerenza have not yet entered the novitiate. Write, therefore, to Father Villani, whether he will give his vote. It is true, they have been accepted; but Father Villani bitterly complains that new subjects are taken without his knowledge. I have told him that hereafter he shall always be informed; do not, therefore, receive them before writing to him.

I send you two copies of the Theology of Parigueux; a long time ago I sent two other copies to Ciorani, and it seems to me that they are still there.

If you have with you the little work entitled: "Solitudine di Filagia" [1] [Solitude of Philagie], send it to me: I wish to consult some passages in it concerning nuns, as I am writing at present on that subject.[2]

Father Melaccio, I am told, must drink the waters; but up to the present he has not come. I bless you all. Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph! Send him immediately.

BROTHER ALFONSO,
of the Most Holy Redeemer.

[*P. S.*] L'Abate Ciceri has recovered his health. Live Jesus and Mary!

After the original in possession of the Redemptoristines at Velp, Holland.

[1] Work of Father de Barry, S. J., translated from the French into Italian by Father Matteo Gherardelli.

[2] The saint was then composing his work *The True Spouse of Jesus Christ.*

LETTER 6.

To the Prioress of the Conservatory of S. Filippo, at Arienzo.

He points out the probable date of his arrival at Arienzo.

Live Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

SANT' AGATA, July 17, 1762.

Reverend Mother: If you desire to see me, I also, on my part, desire to greet you and your pious Community at Arienzo; for we all wish to become saints. For the present I cannot leave Sant' Agata, where I am detained by many difficult matters; but during October I hope to be at Arienzo, and will then speak to you at leisure.

For the present I give you the holy blessing, and I desire very much, that you all should recommend me most particularly to the Most Blessed Sacrament.

Live Jesus and Mary!

Believe me, dear Mother,

Your very devoted servant,

ALFONSO MARIA,
Bishop of Sant' Agata.

After a copy recorded in the process of the Curia of Sant' Agata for the beatification of the servant of God, page 758.

LETTER 7.

To Father Andrea Villani.

There are cases in which one must grant dispensations.

[Date uncertain.]

It is necessary to enforce observance of Rule, but it is not necessary to push things to extremes. The Constitutions do not bind more rigorously than the precepts of the Decalogue. Cases may present themselves, in which it will be necessary to dispense from the Rule; and to refuse dispen-

sations under these circumstances, I mean in certain rare cases in which prudence demands a deviation from the Rule, is not to act well, but to act badly. . .

After a copy recorded in the process of the Curia of Sant' Agata for the beatification of the servant of God, page 1207. *Deposition* of Father Tannoia.

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